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A PHILOSOPHICAL AND HISTORICAL RATIONALE FOR A NEW APPROACH TO "PROBLEMS OF DEMOCRACY," THE SOCIAL UTILITY OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVE. FINAL REPORT.

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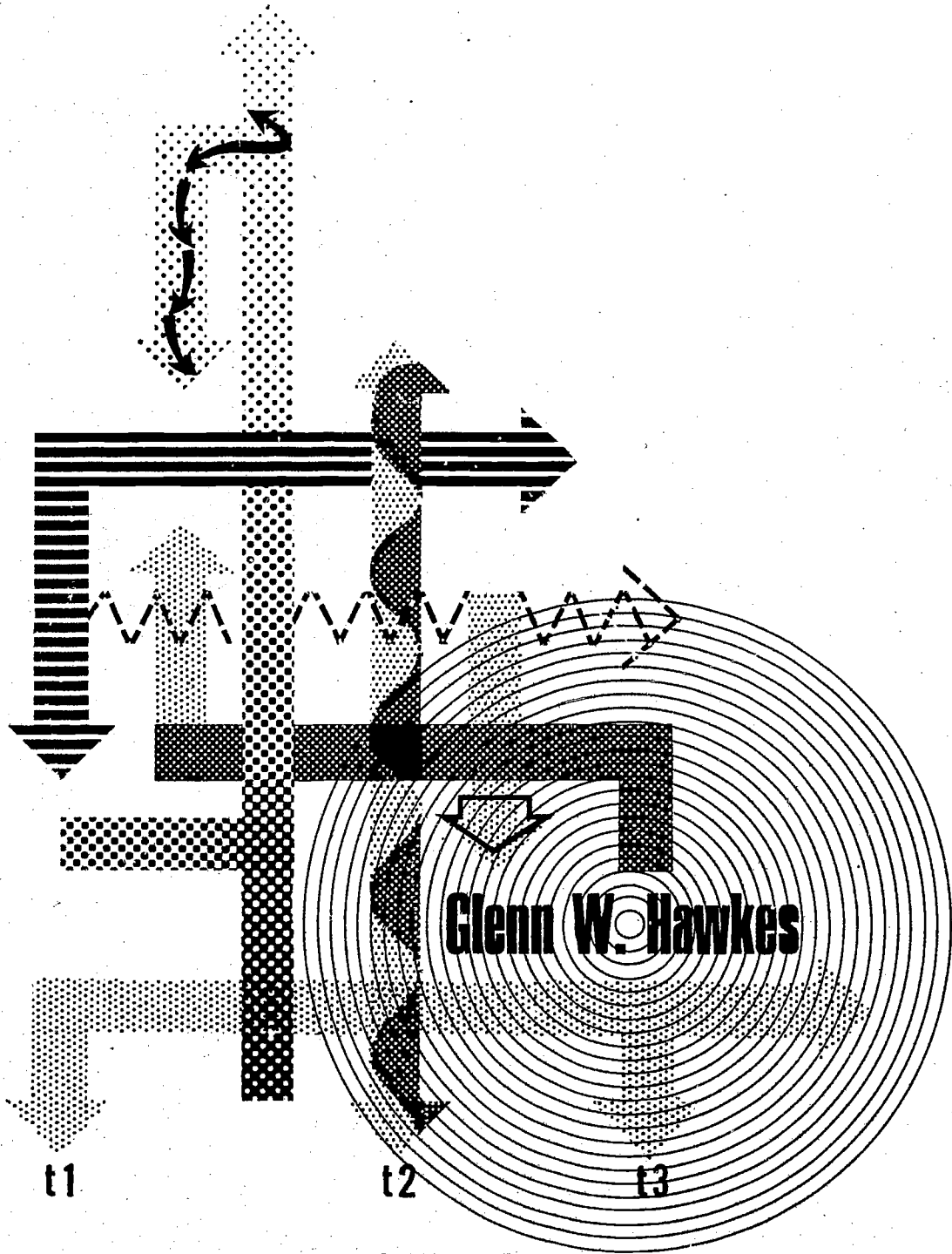
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A RATIONALE FOR A NEW APPROACH TO THE TRADITIONAL SENIOR LEVEL "PROBLEMS" COURSE IS ADVANCED TO (1) STIMULATE DIALOGUE ON THE SOCIAL UTILITY OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVE AND THE NATURE OF HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS, AND (2) HELP ESTABLISH AN ATMOSPHERE FOR CURRICULUM INNOVATION WHICH WILL INCREASE THE EMPHASIS ON HISTORY IN ITS NARRATIVE SENSE. THE REPORT IS DIVIDED INTO THREE PARTS--(1) "AN EXISTENTIAL MODEL" ESTABLISHES A BASIC PROPOSITION ABOUT HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND RELATES THAT PROPOSITION TO THE NATURE AND UTILITY OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVE. (2) "CRITICISM" IS AN ANALYSIS OF WAYS IN WHICH "HISTORY" IS NOW BEING CONSTRUED, AND A CRITICISM OF THOSE WAYS. (3) "CURRICULUM" DISCUSSES THE CONTENT OF A SENIOR-LEVEL COURSE, "IDENTITY AND DEMOCRACY," WHICH IS DERIVED FROM THE ASSUMPTIONS AND CRITICISMS CONTAINED IN PARTS 1 AND 2. AN APPENDIX CONTAINS HISTORICAL ESSAYS AND REFERENCES TO MATERIALS AND IDEAS WHICH HAVE BEEN USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE CURRICULUM. ALSO INCLUDED IS A BRIEF GENERAL STATEMENT WHICH BOTH INTRODUCES AND SUMMARIZES THE REPORT. (AUTHOR/MM)

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THE SOCIAL UTILITY OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

A Philosophical and Historical Rationale for a New Approach to Problems of Democracy

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A PHILOSOPHICAL AND HISTORICAL RATIONALE FOR A  
NEW APPROACH TO "PROBLEMS OF DEMOCRACY" \*

THE SOCIAL UTILITY OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

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February 1, 1968

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## INTRODUCTION

Abraham Lincoln once said "I don't know who my grandfather was; I am much more concerned to know what his grandson will be." On another occasion he noted: "If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do, and how to do it." In both instances he was pondering an issue which is, I maintain, fundamental to our democracy: each man's responsibility to grasp rationally his place and direction in space and time. One of the assumptions in this report is that self-definition is a fundamental concern for those engaged in curriculum development in the social studies area; a related assumption is that rational self-definition is possible in our democracy only when one can think historically. To some people this may appear to be a truism; to others it may be an obscure and meaningless observation; to me, this issue--the capacity to think historically and to define oneself historically--is perhaps the most fundamental issue confronting American educators in the post-mid-twentieth century.

Questions like "who am I?" and "where am I headed?" are, of course, becoming clichés--it is faddish to speak about "identity problems," and it is even becoming faddish to teach courses which construe such problems as central to our age. To some extent critics are correct in pointing out superficial, and sometimes harmful, aspects in the "democratization" of Freud and Erikson; on the other hand, there are some very real and disturbing issues underlying the present concern with "who am I," and it is my purpose to investigate what I think are some of these "real and disturbing issues."

As the title of the report suggests I am also concerned with developing a rationale for a new approach to the traditional senior level "problems" course. There are two major objectives in this task: (1) to stimulate dialogue on a subject which has been somewhat neglected by most historians and educators, namely the social utility of historical narrative, and more specifically the nature of historical consciousness; and (2) thereby to help establish an atmosphere for curriculum innovation which will increase the emphasis on history in its narrative sense.

Many readers will no doubt question the validity of replacing the twelfth grade problems course with a history course, which is what my project entails. Hopefully the report will speak for itself on this matter. It should be stated at the outset, however, that the curriculum ideas expressed in this report are not offered with the desire or expectation that others will adopt them. Mine is not an attempt to "package" something for immediate consumption. The curriculum proposals are my attempt to make relevant for my students what I think is an important problem for our democracy. Hopefully there will be agreement on the importance of the issues raised in the paper; hopefully there will be disagreement on the kinds of curriculum innovation that might be most appropriate on the basis of these issues.



The investigation will raise many questions about the nature of historical thought. The purpose is not to establish a new philosophical position, but rather it is to bridge a gap which now exists between some of those historians and philosophers of history who address themselves to questions about Clio's social utility, and those in the social studies field, like myself, who seek to use Clio in some socially relevant manner. I view this as a task of "translation"; that is, making explicit for the educator some important assumptions which have long permeated the thinking of many historians.

To support the validity of my position, much of the report will contain borrowed ideas, taken from those who command respect in one or several of the academic disciplines. Since educators are prone to look toward the social sciences to justify their work, it is fitting that some reference be made to recent findings in psychology and sociology. It should be noted, however, that such references are not intended as verification for my position: the only verification which I have is based on personal experience as a student and teacher of history, and more importantly on my thinking and acting as an agent in history.

I am just beginning research on many of the ideas that will be explored in the following pages. Thus, my task is really to establish an hypothesis, rather than complete an experiment. Hopefully some of the problems and blunders arising from this initial step will at least stimulate interest and debate on an important educational issue.

The report is divided into four sections: Part I, "An Existential Model," establishes a basic proposition about human behavior and attempts to relate that proposition to the nature and utility of historical narrative; Part II, "Criticism," is an analysis of some of the ways in which "history" is now being construed, both by historians and also by educators, and it is a criticism of those "ways" based on the proposition established in Part I; in part III, "Curriculum," I will briefly discuss a piece of curriculum which is derived from assumptions and criticisms contained in Parts I and II; the final section of the report is an appendix which contains (1) historical essays which have been used in conjunction with the piece of curriculum discussed in Part III, and (2) some references to materials and ideas that have been utilized in teaching the problems course.

Many friends have kindly given time and effort in helping me develop this report: I want to thank John Huie, with whom I have been team-teaching a senior level, Identity and Democracy course, and Kurt Wolff, a colleague whose criticisms of this draft have been innumerable and invaluable; and I would like to thank my advisor, Donald W. Oliver, and Professor A. Stanley Bolster, who have been very helpful in their criticism of my work. Appreciation also goes to Christopher Berrisford, headmaster at St. Mark's School of Texas, for having allowed me time to work on the report; and to two secretaries, Mary Pickard and Catherine Alexander, who have been overworked in typing the materials. Inge Sorensen Ameer kindly consented to take a little of the grimness out of the report by designing a

cover for it. With respect to the ideas which have shaped my historical views, three professors can be implicated: Hugh Brockunier, David Trask, and Loren Baritz, all of whom were at Wesleyan University when I was a student there. To my parents, Walter and Estelle Hawkes, who have sacrificed to make possible my study, I want to give special thanks at this time.

The distinguishing mark between time and eternity is that the former does not exist without some movement and change, while in the latter there is no change at all. Obviously, then, there could have been no time had not a creature been made whose movement would effect some change. It is because the parts of this motion and change cannot be simultaneous, since one part must follow another, that, in these shorter or longer intervals of duration, time begins.

--St. Augustine, The City of God

. . . modern man can be creative only insofar as he is historical; in other words, all creation is forbidden him except that which has its source in his own freedom; and, consequently, everything is denied him except the freedom to make history by making himself.

--Mircea Eliade, Cosmos and History

. . . at the same time man progressed he is (sic) also in a sense going back against progress. Through history whenever man has had a well developed society for his period in history he has always found a way to destroy it. Each time man has done this each time the ~~the~~ loss was greater and the means by which it was done was even on a greater scale. This cannot go on forever because man can not totally protect himself from nuclear (sic) warfare.

--Student, Arlington, Massachusetts, 1966



## PART I -- AN EXISTENTIAL MODEL

### A. An Existential Proposition

One assumption which historians seem to make quite often, and usually unconsciously, about human action is that the historical agent controls his own destiny; that he acts in a manner which is unique to his own purposes, goals, or motives, and that such action reflects a conscious concern with, and control over, an anticipated future. (The term "agent," which is often employed in this respect, is itself indicative of the assumption.) Thus when confronted with a question of why some action was taken, or why some event took place, the historian often seeks to find out how the agent(s) construed the circumstances. An important part of the explanation for an action is taken to be the agent's reason(s) for that action.

There are two approaches to this matter which should be mentioned here. One way to look at the relation between ideas and actions is to view them as causal in a scientific sense; that is, to see an idea as one determinant in a causal sequence. Another way, perhaps less scientific, is to seek explanation in terms of the rationale which apparently served the agent at the time of his action. This kind of historical explanation, often referred to as the rational model, has been treated at some length by William Dray in Laws and Explanation in History. Dray maintains that rational explanation is achieved when action is seen in the context of rational deliberation: "...when it is seen from the point of view of an agent."<sup>1</sup> He does not claim that every action is a rational one, not in the usual sense of that term; he simply suggests that an explanation may be considered rational when it is understood from the agent's viewpoint, that is from the agent's reasoning, regardless of the rationality or irrationality of that viewpoint.

In attempting to demonstrate a unique function for the rational model in historical explanation, Dray correctly points out that there is a form of "pragmatic explanation" used by historians which would not be used by social scientists. He suggests that most historians explain actions and events in a manner that is unique to historical inquiry: that is, by looking to the agent in every case for the rationale, and by accepting that rationale as a complete explanation for the agent's subsequent behavior. Dray seems to put aside concern

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<sup>1</sup> William Dray, Laws and Explanation in History (London: 1957), 150.

for "determining factors" in the more scientific sense; he claims that the historian is not necessarily concerned with that kind of explanation. Unfortunately, he fails to recognize that many historians, like some social scientists, especially in the field of psychology today, view an agent's reason(s) as important in causing actions. On this particular issue, certain opponents of the Dray thesis, like Morton White, seem to have a better grasp of the way many historians approach explanation.

White points out that historians do often help explain causation through exploring the beliefs of the agent(s) involved. He suggests that at times such beliefs might be considered crucial in determining a particular historical action or event, but that they are not always important in this explanatory sense.<sup>1</sup> White argues that causal explanation in history can be similar to that of the natural sciences. In summarizing this position he says that "historians can explain some events and states in just the sense in which natural scientists explain some events," and this explanation might involve thoughts as determining factors in causal sequences. Often, though not always, we can think of the relationship between thought and action as explanatory "...in the same sense as we think of the dropping of the spark as the explanation of the explosion, i.e., we think that the spark was the abnormal factor, the factor that made the difference."<sup>2</sup>

In many respects, Dray stands in the idealist tradition, and White is a spokesman for positivism, or perhaps neo-positivism to the extent that he makes no attempt to ban pragmatic explanation from the realm of legitimate historical investigation. Throughout most of this paper, I will be emphasizing the importance of ideas as determining factors in causal sequences. I do not wish to take a stand either for or against Collingwood in this respect. From my vantage point, it is unnecessary to take sides in the debate. It seems that both Dray and White are wrong to the extent that they might claim to know what the historian does (or should do), but by the same token they are both correct to the extent that they refer to different types of explanation in history. Let us accept the fact that historians often seek to understand an agent's thoughts in order to understand why he acted as he did, and that the thoughts can be considered as determining factors in the scientific sense of that phrase. At the same time, let us qualify our position by pointing out the conditional aspect of man's role in historical causation--thoughts will at most be only one part of a complex interaction of forces which result in some given action or event. In some respects this position is a claim in behalf of

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<sup>1</sup> Morton White, Foundations of Historical Knowledge (New York: 1965), 194-206.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 218, 194-195.

history as science; in some respects, however, it is not. We will try to clarify this matter at a later point in the essay.

Some psychologists, especially those with so-called existential leanings,<sup>1</sup> agree that an important part of the cause for a given action might be found in the agent's reasoning. In much of today's psychology there seems to be an emphasis given to the individual's psycho-social context as interpreted by him as an important factor in shaping his behavior. One's definition, especially one's self-definition, is often considered crucial, perhaps the crucial factor, in an explanation of behavior. Psychologists who think in these terms, as well as philosophers of history like William Dray and Morton White, are concerned with the importance of man's role in determining his world; they are reacting in part to some of the more static and abstract views of human behavior. Without necessarily denying the importance of the irrational in man, they do give emphasis to the power of conscious thought in shaping behavior.

Gordon Allport has been a pioneer in this area. "As psychologists," states Allport, "we ought to know, and do know, that the way a man defines his situation constitutes for him its reality."<sup>2</sup> George Kelly has built a theory of personality around the postulate: "A person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events."<sup>3</sup> Both Allport and also Kelly, it seems, would agree that at one important level of causation the ideas that one holds are determinants for the action one takes.

This general theme, that ideas influence action, has been of interest to man from the dawn of his ability to reflect on the world; it has been only in recent years, however, that man has been able to explore this phenomenon with tools that afford a relatively high degree of predictability. Weber's study of the relationship between religious ideas and the rise of capitalism is a classic in this respect.<sup>4</sup> And more recently, David Mc Clelland--acknowledging Weber's work as a basis for his own--has been one of the many

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<sup>1</sup> See Abraham Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being (New York: 1962), especially the chapter, "What Psychology Can Learn from the Existentialists."

<sup>2</sup> Gordon Allport, Becoming: Basic Considerations for a Psychology of Personality (New Haven: 1955), 84.

<sup>3</sup> George Kelly, The Psychology of Personal Constructs (New York: 1962), Vol. I., 103-104

<sup>4</sup> See Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Talcott Parsons, trans. (New York: 1930); also R. H. Tawney, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism (London: 1926).



thinkers to strengthen the argument which Weber advanced. In his Achieving Society, McClelland explores the relationship between the stories which a society tells its children and the behavior which characterizes that society. He examines the "need for achievement" ("n-achievement") evidenced in the stories, and then examines levels of achievement attained in relation thereto. His conclusions are challenging, and, it should be added, optimistically humanistic:

If our study of the role of achievement motivation in society does nothing else, perhaps it will serve to redress the balance a little, to see man as a creator of his environment, as well as a creature of it.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose here is not to use McClelland's findings as proof for the proposition that ideas influence action--I am in no position to judge the validity of his research--, but rather to suggest that many social scientists do take seriously this general hypothesis, and that this kind of hypothesis might be valuable in formulating a position for using history in the social studies area. For the purposes of developing my general hypothesis about one function of historical narrative, I assume what might be termed an existential proposition about human behavior, which is that to an important extent, man is and becomes in relation to what he sees himself being and becoming; and furthermore, that today what man is and becomes is in part a function of his own choosing, a choosing for which he is responsible.

With respect to the first part of this proposition, (man is and becomes in relation to what he sees himself being and becoming), reason as a phenomenon involving conscious choice and accurate prediction need not be considered a necessary condition. For example, I might picture myself as Superman and leap from the tallest building, but there is no certainty that I will not come crashing to the ground. My anticipation in this case is irrational, lacking in predictive power; but the rational connection of thought and action still holds. Thus, in speaking about causation, we should keep in mind that the fundamental concern is with idealistic representation and its relation to behavior. The use of the term rational here is perhaps unfortunate, for the first part of the proposition discusses man as animal symbolicum, not animal rationale.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> David McClelland, Achieving Society (New York: 1961), 391-92.

<sup>2</sup> Confronted with this problem of defining man's action as rational, irrational, etc., Cassirer offers the following: "Reason is a very inadequate term with which to comprehend the forms of man's cultural life.... But all these forms are symbolic forms. Hence, instead of defining man as an animal rationale, we should define him as animal symbolicum. By so doing we can designate his specific differences, and we can understand the new way open to man--the way to civilization." Ernst Cassirer, An Essay On Man (New Haven: 1944), 26.

The second part of the existential proposition (that today what man is and becomes is in part a function of his own choosing--a choosing for which he is responsible ), introduces a more complex dimension to the issue of causation. The first and most important point to keep in mind here is that the assumption is qualified by historical considerations; that is, man's capacity for responsible choice is viewed as an historical "event." We will consider this aspect of the proposition more fully in the second part of this report. For the moment, let us consider an immediate situation, my writing this report, as an illustration of the existential proposition.

I have been asked to justify an approach to history, and in so doing I am expected to say something about man's nature, his place in society, his impact on history, etc. I have been exposed to various views of human nature, both in every day experiences and also in formal training, and thus I am confronted with positions from "a" to "z"--at the same time, of course, I am limited by what I have not experienced, and by the general circumstances determining my place in the world. Part of my grasp of myself and my world, my presence, involves a gut-impression that I have some choice in this whole matter; that is, I experience what seems to be the raw fact of being a choosing animal. If I say that this is an illusion, that there is no choice, then I must be saying something that I do not choose to say. Furthermore, if there is no choice, I am hardly responsible for the words you are now experiencing, for only where there is choice is there also responsibility. If one makes no case for responsibility, then one is perhaps correct in denying choice, but anyone holding this position should consider its implications, the first being that it is an irresponsible position to the extent that one is not responsible for choosing the position. Thus, on the basis of my most immediate experience, the existential proposition seems to have predictive power.

Another consideration, not mentioned in the existential proposition, is the extent to which I choose for others while I choose for myself. For example, in my choosing a model for human nature I am also willing a model; through symbolic construction I am extending power which might influence others in a manner which changes for them the situation in which they choose. I do not assert that the existential model is true for all men at all times--in fact, I suspect that many men have not been choosing animals--but I accept, nay I embrace and will, the model for my world. This position is as much rooted in my democratic heritage as it is in the thinking of Pèrre Teilhard de Chardin or Jean-Paul Sartre.

The existential proposition holds that man has rational choice, that man "becomes" in relation to that choice, and that responsibility exists only where there is choice. I believe that this is what many philosophers, as well as many psychologists and other social scientists, are conveying in their use of the term existential. Many, of course, no doubt intend something quite

different, and in most instances something much more complex. We will turn at a later point to some of the issues and questions that arise with respect to the use of an existential proposition in developing a piece of public school curriculum. For the moment, however, it might be useful to look briefly at some general ways in which the proposition has force in a society that places value on an individual's capacity for rational choice.

## B. Locke and Sartre

The old dilemma of free will vs. determinism is not one on which I choose to linger. In clarifying my stance, let me turn briefly to Sartre. He insists that his philosophical assumptions are humanistic in their emphasis on man's freedom to choose what he will become, and in his responsibility for the choices that he makes. Sartre does not insist that this is a simple matter of free will over determinism, but rather that it is a matter of both free will and determinism. Man's condition, the condition in which Sartre finds himself and which he says he wills for others, is that he exists in circumstances which make him a choosing creature, even perhaps of choosing not to choose. Thus, one encounters oneself and the world in a condition of freedom. One could say that his is a deterministic philosophy, and I see no problem here if by determinism one simply means that there are causes for a particular state of affairs--in this case, the causes for a state of freedom. But this conception of determinism is not what people usually mean when they use the term. Through circumstances over which we have no control, and about which we have little understanding, we have been shaped as creatures of choice. This is something of a condemnation to the extent that there is no escape, "no exit." Many of us find ourselves condemned to a condition of conscious choice. The issue, then, need not be freedom vs. slavery, but rather it is a special kind of determinism, or perhaps a special kind of slavery. The essence here is that today man makes himself after encountering himself in the world--existence for man thus comes before what man becomes:

What do we mean by saying that existence precedes essence?  
We mean that man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world--and defines himself afterwards.... He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself. Thus, there is no human nature.. Man simply is. Not that he is simply what he conceives himself to be, but he is what he wills, and as he conceives himself after already existing--as he wills to be after that leap towards existence. Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. That is the first principle of existentialism. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Existentialism is a Humanism," in Walter Kaufmann, ed., Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre (New York: 1956), 290-291.



I am not suggesting here that I accept the philosophy which Sartre and others have developed. I do suggest, however, that the existentialist position offers a rather positive view of man from a humanistic vantage point. The emphasis which I take from existentialist philosophy is that which construes the human being as an author, actor, and director in behalf of life as a production. Using the language of modern technology, Ortega offers a conception similar to Sartre's:

...we are dealing with an entity that has to act in order to be; its being presupposes action. Man...is self-made, autofabricated. The word is not unfitting. It emphasizes the act that in the very root of his essence man finds himself called upon to be an engineer. Life means to him at once and primarily the effort to bring into existence what does not exist offhand, to wit: himself.<sup>1</sup>

But at this point the reader might well object that the general tone is rather too optimistic, and that in fairness to men like Sartre and Ortega, one must consider their views on the less sunny side of life. That many existentialists are less than optimistic in their general view of the human condition is hardly a point for debate: there is a tone of despair which colors their portrait of life. But while this is so, it is not necessarily to be taken as a refutation of man's dignity and his capacity to build constructively for the future. If choice is to be more than superficial, it must entail that which is ugly as well as that which is beautiful. This is more than the necessity for ugliness as a sine qua non for any definition of beauty: ugliness is necessary because freedom to choose is freedom to choose sickness and death as well as health and life. In his Notes from Underground, Dostoevsky brings home this point in a clear and frightening fashion. There is something life-confirming in this position; there is a silent optimism which is often rejected by those who may not want to face this side of the freedom equation.

Colin Wilson, in attempting to carve himself a unique niche in twentieth century thought, has directed strong criticism against Sartre, Camus, Jaspers, Heidegger, and other existentialists whom he claims are responsible for helping to make existentialism an "intellectualised romanticism," smacking of "stoicism and defeat." Wilson's concern is that these men have promoted an atmosphere of gloom, that they have advanced an idea of freedom, but along with it an idea that there is nothing for which such freedom has value. His own view, which he claims is a "new existentialism," entails Husserl's concept of "phenomenology"; he looks to Husserl and concludes that even in consciousness

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<sup>1</sup> Jose Ortega y Gasset, "Man the Technician," in History as a System (Norton edition; 1961), 116.

itself there is a degree of "intentionality" which can not be taken for granted:

Man has reached an impasse in his evolutionary development because he has not yet made the discovery that his perception can...be changed; where consciousness is concerned, he still suffers from the "passive fallacy"--that as things are, so they must remain. <sup>1</sup>

Wilson is more optimistic than Sartre, and he stresses this point, but I am not impressed with his claim that he has moved beyond the "old existentialists"; I suspect that he has become a prisoner of his own philosophy to the extent that he has intentionally failed to grasp much of the quiet optimism which Sartre, Camus, and others have promoted. I am in no position to argue pro or con with respect to Sartre's views on man's power over his own perceptions. I suspect, however, that his views are closer to Wilson's than Wilson is willing to admit. I find Sartre's Words to be full of the quiet optimism to which we have referred--others who have read this book, however, have reacted quite differently, more in agreement with Wilson's interpretation. For example, I would read into his last paragraph of that book something that suggests a view of man as free and dignified; others will read something of gloom and pessimism:

What I like about my madness is that it has protected me from the very beginning against the charms of the "elite": never have I thought that I was the happy possessor of a "talent"; my sole concern has been to save myself--nothing in my hands, nothing up my sleeve--by work and faith. As a result, my pure choice did not raise me above anyone. Without equipment, without tools, I set all of me to work in order to save all of me. If I relegate impossible Salvation to the proproom, what remains? A whole man, composed of all men and as good as all of them and no better than any. <sup>2</sup>

Sartre asserts that he has saved himself. What he means, I think, is that he has made himself. In any event, he takes no one to task for what he is, other than himself--he accepts the responsibility for his project.

A major reason why existentialism can be a humanism and still appear gloomy is that man choosing is man with a burden. "Anguish," "abandonment,"

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<sup>1</sup> Introduction to the New Existentialism (Boston: 1966), 55.

<sup>2</sup> New York, 1964.

and "despair," common words in the existentialist vocabulary, are phenomena related to the burden encountered; likewise, flights into fantasy and elements of self-deception ("defenses" in the Freudian framework) are similarly related to the burden of choice. Be they correct or not, many existentialists would claim that theirs is a humanistic commitment because, not in spite of, the less sunny side. Furthermore, they claim that one dimension of the burden is responsibility:

...the first effect of existentialism is that it puts every man in possession of himself as he is, and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders. And when we say that man is responsible for himself, we do not mean that he is responsible only for his own self, we do not mean that he is responsible only for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men... When we say that man chooses himself, we do mean that every one of us must choose himself; but by that we also mean that in choosing for himself he chooses for all men.<sup>1</sup>

But one need not turn to Sartre in explaining the existential proposition. Locke is a better choice, especially since our political and social values are so wedded to his philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., "Existentialism is...", 291.

<sup>2</sup> In using the term "value" or "value orientation" in this paper I am not concerned with specific goals, nor with suggesting that all members of a group or society necessarily participate in them in an equal manner. Parsons's definition seems quite appropriate to the way in which this term will be used throughout: "Values ... are the commitments of individual persons to pursue and support certain directions or types of action for the collectivity as a system and hence derivatively for their own roles in the collectivity. Values are, for sociological purposes, deliberately defined at a level of generality higher than that of goals--they are directions of action rather than specific objectives..." Parsons's qualification is also appropriate: "No value system is ever perfectly internalized and institutionalized but its status is uneven in different personalities and subcollectivities of the society... It should be clear that using values as the...point of reference... does not imply that they are the sole or even the important determinants of particular structure and processes in such systems." *Structure and Process in Modern Societies* (Glencoe Illinois: 1960), 172, 173.

In an age that questions the entire natural law basis upon which Locke's social theory was built (and which also questions whether Locke himself ever believed his own thoughts on the subject), it might be expected that social and political ideals derived from such a base would perhaps be rendered powerless. Yet this is not the case, and in part because in many important respects one can still accept the most basic propositions which Locke derived from a natural law base, and at the same time reject that base. From an existential vantage point, it almost seems that Locke was writing two different philosophies: one to please those (including himself) who still needed to believe that "the law" was something transcending man, perhaps a gift from God; and the other to please those who were beginning to sense man's role as creator in the world, a creator of law in the most fundamental sense.

It appears that Locke's views with respect to man in society (after man chose to leave the state of nature) were a reflection of his faith in man's capacity to exercise freedom and to thus participate in his own making. The law here is that there is no law except that which each individual sanctions. Each man has the burden and glory of judging and acting. When the world needs changing, man must change it; more explicitly, it is man's responsibility to judge when political abuses arise--abuses that are possible only because power is extended from below (not filtered from above). "The people shall be judge." The absolute, in this instance, is that there is no absolute; the essence that there is no essence. Those who used Locke, men like Jefferson and Lincoln, acted with a commitment to this aspect of his thinking. There is an existential key that can be applied to Locke which, with all the evils of hindsight, suggests that he opened a new door, one which left man to himself: man creates the law under which he lives, he thus shapes the society in which he lives, and therefore, in no small way, makes himself. Furthermore, man is responsible for the law he creates, for the society he molds, and for the self he makes. In economic terms, Locke offered a new freedom for the rising middle class; in political terms, he laid bare the evils of "divine right"; in religious terms, he prepared the West for the "death of god"; and in psychological terms, he forged weapons for the "murder of the father." From my perspective, however, what is most crucial is that he helped give birth to a new concern for the individual and his capacity to rule in the most fundamental sense of that term.

The point here is that when one removes from Locke the universal natural law which was supposedly so necessary to his political ideas about individual rights and responsibilities, one finds indeed none other than Sartre. Locke entered history with a picture of history, and although his picture was determined in a million ways, it was also a creation, and he was responsible for it. The law of which he spoke was the law which he willed into his world, onto his fellow man and himself. His was an existential commitment no less than our own, and no less than those divine right rulers whom he criticized.

What I find most appealing about the American political tradition is its



commitment to humanism, and the belief in man's dignity, especially the idea of having choice and responsibility. The substance here is that all of man's strutting on the stage of life is indeed, in important respects, directed from within, rather than from without, behind, or above.

### C. The Future Dimension

One poet has told us that "time present and time past are both perhaps present in time future, and time future contained in time past." I am not prepared to launch into a discussion of the way(s) in which symbolic construction is related to issues of time and space; however I will briefly touch on the matter here, and in the second part of this paper return to it again.

Since man is animal symbolicum it is impossible to speak of him without speaking of the presence of the future which lives in his symbolic constructions. It is a future which is both a gift and also a burden, and for most of us it is perhaps more with us than the past:

We live much more in our doubts and fears, our anxieties and hopes about the future, than in our recollections or in our present experiences. <sup>1</sup>

But for all of us, the present is pregnant with both past and future--it is an abstract bulge located between two places of birth. There is no way of separating past and future--the present and future can never be fully understood as a culmination of the past, the past and present are no simple reflection of the future. Past is in the future, just as future in past, and both are in the present, in our presence.

Ernst Cassirer's work on a philosophy of symbolic forms is instructive in pointing up the important future dimension which inhabits all of man's creations. He is especially concerned with man's capacity to project himself into the future through symbol: "...the theoretical idea of the future...becomes an imperative of human life." Cassirer notes that prophecy is "...nowhere better expressed than in the lives of the great religious prophets," and I underline his use of the term "lives," for I want to reinforce the assertion that prophecy involves one's whole being, not simply one's thought processes. <sup>2</sup>

With respect to rational inquiry, so often directed toward the future, with its emphasis on prediction, it is perhaps a truism that depth and awareness of

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<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., Cassirer's Essay, 53.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 53-55.

the past will condition depth and awareness of the future. There are many ways of having "depth and awareness," and we should not assume that a great knowledge of the past automatically offers a great insight into the future, but to the extent that one is able to bring the past into a meaningful perspective with respect to the present, it seems probable that one will also develop perspective toward what lies ahead. Such perspective will be enhanced through actually taking the existential element into account.

Man's strength as a creator in the world--perhaps starting with "representations" scratched onto the walls of his caves--has always involved something more than what we usually mean by simple prediction. We know that there was no direct, cause-effect relation between the cave dweller's drawing of "the kill" and the actual death of the animal, or between the sticking of a pin in the doll and the subsequent death of the person represented; but we do know that the power of the idea, the anticipation through symbol--in the first case for the actor, in the second for the one acted upon--was often important to the event which followed. In such instances it is promise, as experienced and advanced through representation, rather than simple prediction, which seems to prevail.<sup>1</sup>

In advocating a theory of personality which stresses man's "moving toward" as well as his "moving from," I have tried to provide a psychological base for exploring the future in the present. I have not attempted to prove this point with psychological findings, but I have noted some positions which lend support--Allport's emphasis on "becoming" is one such position. Allport stresses the way a person strives toward the future in a process of "becoming," and in so doing the person becomes, in no small way, what he strives toward. In moving away from an obsession with the past which has long characterized psychological research, Allport envisages an individual freed from the "was" and given over to the "will be." Or perhaps one should qualify this by saying that the individual is freed to transcend or overcome the "was," which is in part a confirmation of it. It should be noted that Allport's position, unlike that of many psychological theorists, is compatible with a democratic faith, and that he is aware of his own purposes in this respect:

Up to now the "behavioral sciences," including psychology, have not provided us with a picture of man capable of creating or living in a democracy. These sciences in large part have imitated the

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<sup>1</sup> In his classical and now dated study, Sir James Frazer noted many instances where strength or weakness, even life or death, hinged on the power of that which was "represented." The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion (New York: 1922).



billiard ball model of physics, now of course out-moded. They have delivered into our hands a psychology of an "empty organism," pushed by drives and molded by environmental circumstances. What is small and partial, what is external and mechanical, what is early, what is peripheral and opportunistic--have received the chief attention of psychological systems builders. But the theory of democracy requires also that man possess a measure of rationality, a portion of freedom, a generic conscience, propiarte ideals, and unique value. We cannot defend the ballot box or liberal education, nor advocate free discussion and democratic institutions, unless man has the potential capacity to profit therefrom. In The Measure of Man, Joseph Wood Krutch points out how logically the ideals of totalitarian dictatorships follow from the premises of "today's thinking" in mental and social science. He fears that democracy is being silently sabotaged by the very scientists who have benefited most from its faith in freedom of inquiry. <sup>1</sup>

More than Allport's words, or perhaps I should say in the action of which his words are one part, the important thing to note here is that he enters the world with his creation, he wills for man a picture which is, in fact, that of a creature with freedom. The existential proposition underlies his work.

Science in all areas has told us that there are many different forces at work in the world, and that many of these are seemingly in competition and contradiction to one another. We know that at all times there are within living organisms certain forces and tendencies toward life and construction, and others toward death and destruction. We know too, from psychology, that in man's inner life, eros and thanatos do constant battle. We assume, I think, that conflicting and competing phenomena are balanced in favor of constructive rather than destructive unfolding, and yet, this is itself an assumption which we hold, and which cannot be proven until we accept other assumptions about the systems of proof employed. Ultimately we can only have faith that it is so, but how important that faith! Our willingness (willing-ness) to confirm life rather than death, itself a choice, is no small part of future-in-the-present, our making ourselves what we are and will be--it is a particular kind of entering into the drama of being and although it is seemingly supported by scientific inquiry, in fact it underlies that inquiry.

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<sup>1</sup> " Op. cit., Becoming, 100. "

D. Prophetic Narrative--An Existential Model

Man's choosing reaches far beyond the simple, or not so simple, matter of selecting in the market place of perception. There are many choices that do seem to be a matter of simple preference, like choosing blonds over brunettes, because they "have more fun," etc. But, choosing entails internal as well as external phenomena, perhaps to the extent of even influencing to some degree the nature of one's perception.

If one accepts the existential proposition, then one is faced with some questions about the nature and function of historical narrative as one form of self-definition, individual and collective. Narrative weaves various events and actions from the past--captured in symbol--into patterns which are intended to make sense to those who read or hear them. One type of narrative is extremely important in this respect (because of its potential relation to social action), namely that type which focuses on the historical life of the particular society for which the story is being told or written. In said case, the historian might be giving his audience a sense of identity, an idea about who they are in relation to where they have been, where they are headed, and also in relation to how others might view them from the outside.

I have chosen to use the term "prophetic narrative" in part because the Hebrew prophets demonstrated well how grand historical statements could enter space and time, shaping identity and history. In important respects, historical construction is prophetic construction. In an essay entitled "History as Spirit," Sten H. Stenson comments on this relationship:

No matter how secular an historian's orientation may be, his situation is similar, in certain important respects, to that of the Old Testament prophets. The prophets also were historians, although religious ones, and they were quite aware of the fact that they could not read signs without themselves becoming part of the signs that they read and of the truth that was thereupon established in the Chosen (choosing) People.

The past, as Stenson points out, "...is not finished, and it is philosophically confusing to think of it as though it were." <sup>1</sup>

Self-definition is of concern to the historian, especially as he "speaks" to a particular social entity about its life. History, in this sense, is the result of an ongoing process of definition which takes place from within; it is a process

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<sup>1</sup> Sydney Hook, Philosophy and History (New York: 1963), 365.

involving identification for both individual and group, a process not simply grasped as something directed from or toward the past and present.

In his little book, What Is History, E. H. Carr discusses the historian's role as an agent in history. According to Carr, history "...is something still incomplete in the process of becoming--something in the future towards which we move, which begins to take shape only as we move towards it, and in the light of which, as we move forward, we gradually shape our interpretation of the past." <sup>1</sup> The historian is no static entity in this shaping process, but rather a vital choosing force--he reaches into the future at the same time that he reaches into the past, and he shapes both.

It is interesting again to suggest that with respect to personality development, Gordon Allport's Becoming offers some strikingly similar views on behavior and history. In asserting that "broad intentional dispositions, future pointed," are the "most comprehensive units in personality," Allport implies that anticipation and expectations about the future--in terms of goals and events--are important in shaping individual action. He does not attempt to explain how this phenomenon is worked out in the individual's personality, but he is firm in his opinion that broad dispositions are important in that personality. Psychologists, he notes with some irritation, have long been unduly preoccupied with behavior that is "reactive and punctate," and they should give more attention to behavior "that involves long sequences of time." <sup>2</sup>

With a somewhat different perspective, Erik Erikson has taken a similar position with respect to man's openness toward the future. He has persuasively indicated that one's sense of identity cannot be viewed as a static phenomenon, the simple culmination of "what has been." Identity, viewed as it must be in a particular socio-historical context, involves an ever expanding involvement with others, depending on the "...organism's readiness to be driven toward, to be aware of, and to interact with, a widening social radius, beginning with the dim image of mother and ending with mankind, or at any rate that segment of mankind which 'counts' in the particular individual's life." <sup>3</sup>

Hopefully, one can readily see the relationship between these psychological ideas and the function of the historian as a story-teller. For many years the

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<sup>1</sup> E. H. Carr, What is History (New York: 1962), 161.

<sup>2</sup> "Op. cit., Becoming, 75."

<sup>3</sup> "Identity and the Life Cycle," Psychological Issues (Vol. I, 1, 1959). 52.

historian has played an important role in offering or failing to offer his society ideas, information, and value orientations which are important to an individual's involvement with what Erikson terms the "widening social radius." It seems evident that the process by which any individual comes to identify with "what counts" might be closely related to what that society offers him by way of a construction of what counts. Historical reconstructions, especially those written about the society for which they are developed, enter into the "long-range dispositions" of those who come to believe. The historian who attempts to construe reality, past and present, moves into the realm of said dispositions, that is, to the extent that he is at all effective in his task.

This is not to say that the individual does not choose, or that he is automatically determined by such narrative, but it is to assert a potential importance for historical narrative as one factor among others which shape the context in which the individual must choose.

As we have spoken of it here, narrative might be of value in helping an individual develop a sense of location and direction; but more than this, it has a content that helps him define himself as a significant creature. The whole idea of the "self-concept," so important to the psychological thinking of our day, suggests the importance of the sense of worth which an individual places on his own person--a worth which not only helps determine how the individual will interact with others, but also how he will treat himself. The kind of narrative of which we have been speaking is closely related to the phenomenon of the self viewing the self.

There are many possible explanations, psychological and otherwise, for the need which men seem to have for viewing themselves as important in relation to other men in other places and times. One common explanation is that man, when confronted with the overwhelming power of events and circumstances beyond his control, bolsters his trembling ego with thoughts of significance, perhaps even greatness. This might even apply where man's identity is construed in terms of littleness, that is, where he defines himself as a meaningless creature, subject to forces (God, for example) beyond his control--the idea of significance prevails, even where man is viewed as a "sinner in the hands of an angry God."

Some thinkers would argue that what is involved here is man's consciousness of existing in relation to some future non-existence, that is, his awareness of death as a condition of life. Paul Tillich has spoken of man's concern with "the threat of non-being." In this respect, narrative might well provide for an individual a view of himself as transcending his immediate presence, of establishing a sense of eternal being.

There are other possibilities, however, and some are less related to individual needs. An evolutionary explanation might be advanced: as social



creatures, men have not been able to rely on instinctual mechanisms, but have created symbolic constructions through which collective unity and security, survival itself, have been achieved. Indeed, many of the "discontents" of individuals within civilizations have been traced to the "instinctual renunciations" which collective security demands.<sup>1</sup> The incest taboo is an example of how social organization is advanced through such renunciation; with respect to larger groups, exogamy has served a similar function. Both of these taboos involve self-discipline that is inseparable from symbolic construction. This point is stressed because it is quite possible that there is a close relationship between the more mythological kinds of symbolic construction which have long been recognized as having survival value for the species, and the kinds of historical construction which have, in relatively recent times, provided a "social cement" for mankind.

With some good reason today narrative is rarely looked on as necessary to the survival of the species, even though it is widely recognized that a sense of worth and direction is as important to groups of men as it is to the individuals comprising them. In fact, it is probably safe to say that most historians and social studies educators are quite convinced that narrative, of the type we have defined, is rather harmful to man's collective security. We will return to this issue when speaking more directly about present thinking in this area.

The narrative to which we have referred is that which has the function of indicating to individuals within a particular social entity some of the historical reasons for their existence. This kind of narrative need not reflect any conscious attempt by its author to serve men with a particular "function." It is nonetheless functional to the extent that it becomes part of an individual's frame of reference, and in this paper I will henceforth refer to it as the existential model, or more simply as prophetic narrative.

#### E. The Model In Action

Through their own thought and action historians and philosophers have entered history prophetically for better or for worse, depending on one's vantage point. Nietzsche both thought and acted on the assumption that the "...language of the past is always oracular: you will only understand it as builders of the future who know the present."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I am thinking specifically of Freud's thesis in Civilization and its Discontents, but the point is by no means solely his own.

<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche, The Use and Abuse of History, Adrian Collins, trans. (New York: 1964), 5.

Ortega stated his case briefly and explicitly: "It is the future which must prevail over the past, and from it we take our orders regarding our attitude toward what has been." <sup>1</sup> John Dewey, unlike many of his disciples, was fully aware of the existential impact of historical speculation:

....the writing of history is itself an historical event. It is something which happens and which in its occurrence has existential consequences....historical inquiry and construction are agencies in enacted history. <sup>2</sup>

Jaspers not only comments on the prophetic nature of historical thought, but also explicitly weaves a narrative which reflects his belief. In The Origin and Goal of History, he sprinkles the story of human progress toward "one mankind" (his "willing" one mankind) with statements that contain as much faith as fact:

The future of humanity does not come of itself...like a natural happening. What men do today and at every moment, what they think and expect, at once becomes an origin of the future, which is in their hands.

. . . . .

There is no statement concerning the future...in so far as the human will is involved in its realization, that is not, or could not become, a contributory factor. The statement has the effect of impelling us toward something, or of frightening us away from it. In particular, alleged knowledge of the prospective future is a factor that contributes toward bringing it about.

. . . . .

No prognosis is harmless. Whether it is true or untrue, it ceases to be a contemplative vision and becomes a call to action. What man deems possible moves his inner attitude and his deeds. <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ortega, The Revolt of the Masses (New York: 1957, ed.), 80.

<sup>2</sup> John Dewey, The Theory of Inquiry (New York: 1938), 230-239.

<sup>3</sup> Jaspers, The Origin and Goal of History, Michael Bullock, trans. (London: 1953), 149, 151, 150, 267.



But perhaps we have gone astray in exploring these philosophical and historical bits and pieces. To better illustrate the point about prophetic history and its existential message, I invite my reader to think for a moment about books which he may have on his shelf, books written about his society, and which are designed to tell the society how it happened to become what it is. Is not the evidence beyond doubt?; does not the historian readily move beyond the past and into the future?

Some historians will be more explicit than others in spelling out their future orientations and commitments. For example, toward the end of his monumental study, William McNeill tells his readers what he has been moving toward in terms of a vision for the future:

What such a vision of the future anticipates... is the eventual establishment of a worldwide cosmopolitanism, which, compared with the confusion and haste of our time, would enjoy a vastly greater stability. <sup>1</sup>

It appears that McNeill's construction of the past was influenced throughout by his faith in man's capacity to mold the future. It is in this sense that McNeill is himself constructing, rather than simply reconstructing. He chooses to view man as a choosing animal; at least he chooses this for modern man. It is true, without question, that facts influence McNeill's faith--he cannot simply wish freedom onto mankind--, but it is no less true to say that his faith influences the selection and arrangement of fact. To say, as McNeill does, that the "plasticity of human affairs should... be exhilarating..." <sup>2</sup> is to say something of value rather than of fact; for there are those, perhaps staunch economic determinists, who would not characterize human affairs as having "plasticity," and there are those who, even if they found plasticity, might not find it at all "exhilarating."

In looking to my bookshelf, I find several different kinds of historical narrative, all of which can be termed prophetic. For example, in Louis Hartz's The Liberal Tradition in America, there is an attempt to make history existentially meaningful. Hartz develops his thesis around the questions: "Can a people 'born equal' ever understand peoples elsewhere that have to become so? Can it ever understand itself?" His faith, it seems, is that the American people can and will understand others who have not been "born equal," and his mission is

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<sup>1</sup> William McNeill, The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community (Chicago: 1963), 806, 807.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

to provide a frame for viewing America in a manner which will make possible such an understanding--a frame which will prepare the way for more effective relations with non-Americans in the future, as well as a better understanding for ourselves:

What is at stake is nothing less than a new level of consciousness, a transcending of irrational Lockianism, in which an understanding of self and an understanding of other go hand in hand. Nor can one omit the large consequences for the whole free world which this would involve. <sup>1</sup>

Hartz's work is based on his hopes and anticipations for the future; his dreams are born out of the past, but they are not incarcerated there. And to the extent that he can, through his narrative, convince Americans that Americanism (as he defines it) is dead, or at least that it should be, he will help fulfill his own prophecy; he will help realize his dream, his image of the future which is implicit in his treatment of the past.

He would admit that his construction of the past is influenced by his hopes for the future; furthermore, his desire to change men is cast in a broad and bold construction of the present in relation to both past and future. The future is not painted in great detail, for he thinks such detail throttles incentive and creativity--through an imaginary picture, a broad outline, he attempts to move men's minds, and their hearts and their deeds. <sup>2</sup>

Hartz is no psychologist, yet his insights about projecting into the future broad yet unfinished pictures of what society might become are not alien to the study of individual behavior. Allport indicates that "...it is the unfinished structure that has...dynamic power. A finished structure is static; but a growing structure, tending toward a given direction of closure, has the capacity to subsidiate and guide conduct in conformity with its movement." <sup>3</sup> With this in mind, it is interesting to note that Professor Hartz has not only had much impact in terms of the behavior of his students, but he has also shaped the direction of

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution (New York: 1955), 308.

<sup>2</sup> I have heard Professor Hartz lecture on these matters, and I have had the opportunity to discuss them with him--I express these views on the basis of those encounters.

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit., Becoming, 91.

his own work as seen in his recent study, The Founding of New Societies.<sup>1</sup> Hartz therefore influences Hartz.

Like Hartz, Richard Hofstadter concludes a masterly work on American thought with an appeal for existential involvement on the part of his audience; he implies that "avenues of choice" are closed only when men grasp them as closed --although he qualifies this humanistic assumption:

It is possible, of course, that under modern conditions the avenues of choice are being closed, and that the culture of the future will be dominated by single-minded men of one persuasion or another. It is possible; but in so far as the weight of one's will is thrown onto the scales of history, one lives in the belief that it is not to be so.<sup>2</sup>

Hofstadter seems to be doing his best to influence "the scales of history"; through his use of the past, he attempts to influence the future. Like Hartz, he consciously enters history, and invites others to join him. He not only "lives in the belief," but also "lives the belief"--his action cannot be separated from his believing. As in Hartz's case, a more recent publication, The Paranoid Style In American Politics, reflects his "becoming" orientation with respect to his own "broad intentional dispositions."<sup>3</sup>

Another example of the existential phenomenon in American history is Oscar Handlin's The Americans. This study traces many of the themes of our heritage, and points out how certain circumstances, forces, and events in the mid-twentieth century have made some traditional value orientations obsolete, or awkward at best. In one phrase he suggests what has happened to certain remnants from a fast fading past: "...by now, the space was gone; the brutal world closed in; the bomb dangled...."<sup>4</sup> His is no simple treatment or description of days gone by: it is an attempt to influence a course of action; an attempt to root from the present those elements of its past which might strangle a people

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<sup>1</sup> New York: 1964.

<sup>2</sup> Hofstadter, Anti-Intellectualism In American Life (New York: 1964) 432

<sup>3</sup> The Paranoid Style in American Politics (New York: 1965).

<sup>4</sup> Oscar Handlin, The Americans: A New History of The People of the United States (Boston: 1963), 416.

who he thinks have been thrust into a world which they neither recognize nor desire. This is an attempt, through historical narrative, to offer orientation in a context which is characterized by disorientation, and to shape the future accordingly.

Thus my bookshelf confirms for me the validity of the existential model. Once again, this model refers to that kind of history which is written for and about a particular group of people, and to the extent that such narrative is effective, it will help shape the identity of that people, and to the extent that it becomes part of an individual's experience, it is a potentially important factor in determining his behavior. Not all historians who write this kind of history are consciously aware of the implications and assumptions in their work with respect to the future. Nonetheless, prophetic narrative, as defined herein, is a factor in historical causation--it involves man's conception of "what will be," or "might be," as well as what "has been" or "might have been."

In this first section of the paper I have attempted to promote a position which attacks head on any tendency to belittle man's freedom and responsibility to shape the world in which he finds himself. I have attempted to indicate that there is social science evidence to support this existential, humanistic, and democratic assumption; and I have pointed to historians who have not only assumed that man has a rational part in making himself but who have also written history and changed history on this assumption.

#### F. A Footnote on Science--The Self-fulfilling Prophecy

I fear that most of what I have just written appears rather fuzzy with respect to the canons of science, but this may be an erroneous impression, for there is far less certainty than is often assumed concerning the nature of scientific inquiry. There are two general issues to be considered in determining the extent to which any approach to reality is scientific: first we must agree on a definition of science and then we must analyse the approach in terms of that definition.

In his Philosophy of History, W. W. Walsh offers what appears to be a reasonable, and probably generally acceptable, definition of the term:

We apply the term "science" to knowledge which (i) is methodically arrived at and systematically related; (ii) consists of, or at least includes, a body of general truths; (iii) enables us to make successful predictions and so to control the future course of events, in some measure at least; (iv) is objective, in the sense that it is such as every unprejudiced



observer ought to accept if the evidence were put before him, whatever his personal predilections or private circumstances. <sup>1</sup>

While different historians approach their field in different ways, it can be asserted that some definitely do fall under the first three categories in Walsh's scheme. Quite surely historians methodically arrive at, and systematically relate, their findings; and those findings do contain "general truths," even if those truths are of the past; also, there is predictive power in historical knowledge--though one might argue that the situation to which the predictive power applies could never be duplicated, as is the case with much geological knowledge, for example, and as contrasted with knowledge employed in the chemistry laboratory. It is the fourth category, however, which creates many problems for those who would claim that historical knowledge is arrived at scientifically (according to the definition we have established). It is just not true that regardless of "personal predilections or private circumstances" historical evidence would be equally acceptable to "unprejudiced" observers.

In selecting and arranging data in historical narrative, the historian is engaged in value choices which influence the nature of his creation in no small way, and although in dealing with causation in history there is some reason to believe that one can speak about a cause or the cause with a degree of scientific objectivity,<sup>2</sup> there is little evidence to suggest that objectivity does or can control the kinds of selection and arrangement which take place in the construction of historical narrative. Narrative involves fact in the most fundamental social science sense, but it also involves a degree of subjectivity which is, quantitatively if not qualitatively, at odds with scientific method as we have defined it. Beard's essay, "Written History as an Act of Faith," is an enlightening statement on this point. He notes that

... the historian who writes history... consciously or unconsciously performs an act of faith... He is... in the position of a statesman dealing with public affairs; in writing he acts and in acting he makes choices, large or small, timid or bold, with respect to some conception of the nature of things. <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Philosophy of History (Harper Touchbook edition: 1960), 36.

<sup>2</sup> See Hart and Honore<sup>1</sup>, Causation in the Law (Oxford: 1959), for a discussion of the way in which one might claim objectivity on matters involving "a cause," "the cause," etc.

<sup>3</sup> The American Historical Review, XXXIX (January, 1934).

Morton White has criticized Beard for going too far in claiming a non-scientific function for the historian,<sup>1</sup> yet White himself admits that there is a substantial area where the historian's function as narrator is non-scientific.<sup>2</sup>

The historian selects and arranges his facts, indeed he chooses his subject, on bases which are determined by his values. It is possible to have two equally true histories which offer completely different interpretations for the same entity or phenomenon. What one historian might consider as abnormal or unusual, and therefore worth recording--perhaps as the cause in that it was the abnormal factor in a series of otherwise regular determinants--will not necessarily coincide with what another chooses. And when we consider effects rather than causes, the problem of subjectivity becomes even more sticky. In speaking about the historian's "standard of significance," E. H. Carr sums up the picture nicely:

History...is a process of selection in terms of historical significance...history is a "selective system" not only of cognitive but of causal orientations to reality. Just as from the infinite ocean of facts the historian selects those which are significant for his purpose, so from the multiplicity of sequences of cause and effect he extracts those, and only those, which are historically significant; and the standard of historical significance is his ability to fit them into his pattern of... explanation and interpretation.

I have underlined the word "his" in order to emphasize the importance of the historian as an "agent" acting on the data. Historical facts, as Carr notes, are not purely objective, for "...they become facts of history only in virtue of the significance attached to them by the historian." Furthermore, as we have noted, the historian often establishes his standard of significance as he looks toward the future. He seeks to make facts relevant to an end that is continually in the process of becoming what he hopes it will become.<sup>3</sup>

One critic has pointed out that this process of selection is not so much a

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<sup>1</sup> Social Thought in America: The Revolt Against Formalism (Boston:1957 edition), see 231-232.

<sup>2</sup> See his chapter on narration, op. cit., Foundations.

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit., What Is History, 138, 159.



matter of values (the ought and the should) as it is a matter of basic belief (what is).<sup>1</sup> There can be little doubt that most historians, like most social scientists, attempt to minimize their own values in dealing with their data. I would argue, however, that the historian, especially in dealing with vast chunks of the human enterprise--both horizontally (involving numbers of people at any given moment) and vertically (involving long periods of time)--, has problems which most social scientists do not have. Again, however, it should be noted that these categorical generalizations are tenuous: Who is to say that the anthropologist does not face as many of these same problems in his work? And there is another issue here which further muddies the waters for those who might desire hard and fast categories on this matter.

Scientists themselves find it difficult to agree on the kind of issue raised in Walsh's fourth category. Much of the debate centers around the kind of existential consideration that has been discussed in this paper: man enters into his own perceptions, and this includes those working in the so-called hard sciences (a point raised by Heisenberg and a host of others). It is possible that a reinterpretation of scientific method, especially on the subject presented in Walsh's fourth category, will in fact liberate those historians who now so often cringe under what they think is the onus of their ill-disguised subjectivity. It is my belief that this reinterpretation, based on an existential proposition about human behavior, will at last make science a humanism in the fullest sense; it will produce a new element of freedom for man, but at the same time a new heaviness in responsibility; and it will lend respectability to historical inquiry that is admittedly relativistic in the Becker-Beardian sense of the term. Historians have long been on the defensive because of the "scientific" age in which they live. (The reader need only reflect on the way that this writer feels compelled to deal with the issue to get an indication of this defensiveness.) Much of the defensiveness, I believe, is based on the fact that scientists and historians have commonly accepted a definition of science which, in light of new evidence, now appears inadequate. As noted before, some of the most impressive arguments which have been set forth in support of man's determining role in the universe have come from the hard scientists, e. g., those in physics.

Thus, the categories which we have selected are limited in utility. They sometimes create more confusion than clarification in their hard and fast distinctions. When one asserts that the historian deals with that which is unique, and that he is therefore not scientific in that he does not predict the future, one must keep in mind that the anthropologist and geologist share in this problem. When one says that the historian selects his data on the basis of his personal values and goals, one must be equally careful in drawing categorical lines, for

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Bolster, a member of my doctoral committee, raised this point in reading an earlier draft of this paper.

some scientists admit their own subjectivity in this respect.

Having briefly considered the extent to which historical method might be considered scientific, let us turn to a related, but different, question: the extent to which historical constructions in their projective, future oriented, dimension can withstand the test and measure of science. For example, when one holds a particular view of one's place in history, let us say that one believes with Henry Adams that man is helping the world expend its energy at an ever increasing and destructive rate, to what extent can that view be tested just as one tests other hypotheses about man's place in the world? The answer, I think, is that it can be tested just as many other hypotheses about human behavior are tested. This position must be qualified, however, because historical construction can seldom be controlled to the extent that other hypotheses can be, and also because there is, generally speaking, a greater degree of change due to human investment, or lack thereof--in believing Adams, one may in fact help him fulfill his prophecy.

To accept this position, one must first accept a role for ideas in causal sequences; one must view ideas not as "representative" of the real, but as important aspects of reality itself--aspects that, as intertwined with what we usually refer to as trends and forces, help determine the outcome of those trends and forces. Thus, symbolic constructions (and we refer mainly to those which are directly related to one's self-definition) can be viewed as determining factors in causal sequences. This implies a simple cause-effect sequence between ideas, actions, and events--and yet, of course, the phenomenon is so complex that one would be foolhardy to claim much insight, especially on the basis of present scientific findings.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, from a scientific orientation,

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<sup>1</sup> From his sociological perspective, Parsons mentions some of the difficulties that arise when one attempts to shape behavior through offering people "constructions" about their world. On the positive side, he offers a three point guide to successful prediction with respect to influencing others: "The most important thing to be said is that the chances of successful influence do not depend mainly on the apparent 'reasonableness' of what is transmitted but on its relation to the functional equilibrium of the system on which it impinges. This in turn depends on at least three factors: the functional significance of the manifestations it attempts to displace, the potential functions of the new patterns which are put forward, and the appropriateness of the sources and manner of influence, that is, the definition of the situation 'being influenced' from the point of view of the recipients."

Essays in Sociological Theory (New York: 1964), revised edition, 247.

one might venture some predictions about the probable impact of particular ideas in changing the world, given knowledge of the forces and trends which characterize that world.

Although much of the evidence for this case is found in a rather distasteful form--that is, in the understanding that we have gained about totalitarian propaganda techniques, and the "hidden persuaders" of Madison Avenue--, there is no reason to assume that the phenomenon itself is evil. For example, one area in which social science has been quite successful in making predictions and changing society is in the realm of economics, and the existential proposition is reflected in changes that have taken place in economic theory over the past half-century. Today few economists would deny the role of ideas in the "laws" of economic growth and development. Iron laws and inevitable cycles have begun to suffer the fate of natural law. It is commonly accepted, for example, that anticipation of economic growth or decline can trigger off trends in the economy. This is especially true when some authority, like the President of the United States, makes a statement about the economy in particular, or about some other matter of national interest. The public is apt to react en masse to such pronouncements; but more important, or at least as important, is the reaction of a few key men in positions of economic power. These men, in anticipating the future, enter into that future directly--often they are in positions to take action which can have an exaggerated, or "multiplier," effect on the economy.

Early in the Great Depression, F. D. R. eloquently beseeched his nation to stamp out any fear of the future. His words about over-coming fear were not political haranguing; rather they were his attempt to move and shape the course of history through creating a new climate of opinion.

Future expectation is crucial to all economic activity. Keynes spoke directly to this issue in his General Theory:

It is by reason of the existence of durable equipment that the economic future is linked to the present. It is, therefore, consonant with, and agreeable to, our broad principles of thought, that the expectation of the future should affect the present through the demand price for durable equipment.<sup>1</sup>

Economics, of course, is an ideal area to analyze; it lends itself much more to this interpretation than other sectors of human society where fewer statistics exist, and where fewer "important" individuals have such sensitive antennae. In an attempt to measure the impact of ideas on behavior, a look at

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<sup>1</sup> J. M. Keynes, The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money (New York: 1935), 146.

the whole society, rather than just the economic sector, greatly increases the problem. Nonetheless, I suggest that the economic realm simply offers a more manageable example of the kind of phenomenon which exists in all areas of human life. Man's thought enters in--it changes the world for better and for worse. Keynes's revision of the classical model was more than a substitution of one law for another, it involved a new dimension with respect to man and the nature of law, a dimension which reflected not only the "was" and "is" but also the "will be."

Keynes was quite aware of the fact that he was presenting an economic view which drastically revised the classical model through an attempt to recognize man's dynamic role in determining the future. He stressed the way in which men invest themselves in the future. The economic realm, according to Keynes, is only one dimension of this investment, albeit an important one:

...of all human activities which are affected by this remoter preoccupation, it happens that one of the most important is economic in character, namely, wealth. The whole object of the accumulation of wealth is to produce results, or potential results, at a comparatively distant, and sometimes at an indefinitely distant, date.<sup>1</sup>

In taking seriously man's concern with the future, Keynes noted that he was attacking the rather static, classical model:

Perhaps the reader feels that this general philosophical disquisition on the behavior of mankind is somewhat remote from the economic theory under discussion...I think not...I accuse classical theory of being itself one of these pretty, polite techniques which tries to deal with the present by abstracting from the fact that we know very little about the future.<sup>2</sup>

In fairness to Keynes' position, it should be noted that with respect to man's impact on the world, he was apparently more concerned with "factors of utter doubt, precariousness, hope, and fear," than he was with rational choice. And yet it is difficult to make any clear distinction on this issue. Keynes himself admitted that in those aspects of his thought where he called for "cures," his own thinking was "subject to all sorts of special assumptions, ...and (was) necessarily related to the particular conditions of the time."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The New Economics: Keynes' Influence on Theory and Public Policy. Seymour Harris, ed. (New York: 1947), 184.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 192.



Concepts about law in the juridical sense have been subject to the same general trend in twentieth century Western development. Gone are the certainties of the Supreme Court's deification; gone are the certainties which bolstered the confidence of both North and South as they struggled to justify themselves in the mid-nineteenth century; and in place of this certainty, along with uncertainty, is a new awareness that the law is a reflection of those who make it. Thus, we have reinterpreted and extended the Lockean conception, we have helped fulfill it, and we have, in the process, created anxiety and frustration for those who cannot bear the burden of this freedom. Law, like religion and perhaps even physics, is responding to the advance and reinterpretation of "reason" as inherited from the Enlightened world-view. No intelligent man can any longer "objectify" the law; today we invest or disinvest respectively, and we pay the psychological price of this new freedom in many ways.

Implicit in this discussion is the phenomenon of the self-fulfilling prophecy. In its most basic form it entails a rather simple proposition: that the symbolic dimension of reality, where expectations reside, can enter into other dimensions of reality thus changing them according to said anticipations. Here, as noted earlier, it is important to note that the prophecy cannot be treated as something unreal or outside of reality; rather it must be treated as a dimension thereof.

I also think that it is important to note that this phenomenon entails the self (or selves) acting on the world through interpretation and investment; it is not a matter of symbolic reality being pressed upon other men and molding them to something new. The street has two directions.

It is interesting that some thinkers construe the self-fulfilling phenomenon in negative terms, and even attempt to rid mankind of it. For example, in discussing its nature, Robert K. Merton notes that the prophecy is "...a false definition of the situation evoking a new behavior which makes the originally false conception come true." Thus for Merton, the prophecy produces a "vicious circle"; and he advocates a deliberate and planned halt to the workings of this phenomenon.<sup>1</sup>

In advocating a "halt" to the workings of the prophecy (and this is where the irony comes in) Merton himself is defeating his argument, for in fact he is construing what, from his viewpoint, must be considered as a "false definition of the situation," and attempting to change reality through promoting his viewpoint. (If this is not an attempt to do away with self-fulfilling prophecies through employing one, then I do not know what it is! )

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<sup>1</sup> R. K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (New York: 1957 ed.), 423, 425.

I do not hold any moral judgment with respect to the self-fulfilling phenomenon. My assumption is that the prophecy is a vital part of human interrelationships, and that it can be creative and progressive, or destructive and regressive, or both, depending on how one defines "the good." As Gordon Allport suggests, a "...self-fulfilling prophecy may lead to a benign circle as well as to a vicious circle." <sup>1</sup>

For the social scientist this is perhaps an encouraging yet at the same time perplexing consideration. It is encouraging because it places so much emphasis on man's dreams, and on his freedom to choose. It is perplexing because dreams involve not only the "will be," but also the "will," and as such they create special problems for analysis, measurement, and evaluation. Yet, I have tried to point up that there is nothing unscientific in these conditions, for what man is doing is simply taking himself into consideration as important to the hypotheses he constructs. Far from a rejection of science, this would seem to be a confirmation of it. Yet, lest we venture too far in this direction, it should be noted that there are many ideas and concepts which are part of objective reality but which cannot be placed in extant scientific categories. Perhaps the existential proposition is one such construction. If this is the case, it need not be considered untrue or even unscientific but simply a non-empirical proposition, and therefore, non-scientific. <sup>2</sup> On the other hand we have briefly examined one view of scientific which would seem to support the contention that the existential model is in fact an extension of, rather than an exception to, scientific method.

In either case, it should be noted that historical construction can be tested empirically by measuring its predictive power--even though the measuring is complicated by the existential involvement of historical agents. It should also be noted that the process through which an historian goes in establishing his construction of the past (and future) must be viewed as something quite different from the above. In selecting and arranging data in historical narrative, historians engage in value choices which influence the nature of their creations in no small way, and these value choices are, at least quantitatively speaking, reason enough to cast Clio outside the realm that which is usually understood as "scientific." To some extent I have attempted to revise what I think is the commonplace view on this matter, by suggesting that the historian, especially the historian who is conscious of his undertaking in its prophetic dimension, is in fact engaged in an enterprise that is fully scientific.

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon Allport, The Nature of Prejudice (Anchor Book, ed.: 1958), 156.

<sup>2</sup> See Parson's essay, "The Role of Ideas in Social action" in Essays in Sociological Theory (New York: 1964, revised ed.).

Summary: In this discussion of the existential proposition, we have touched on several points which should be kept in mind as we turn to other considerations about the nature and function of historical narrative:

that many historians, as well as some social scientists hold to, and act on, the assumption that man's interpretation of reality, including his own self-definition, is an important dimension of reality, and significant in determining his behavior; further, that this paper rests on an existential proposition closely related to this kind of understanding and explanation of causation, the proposition being that man is and becomes in relation to what he sees himself being and becoming; and furthermore, that today what man is and becomes is in part a function of his own choosing, a choosing for which he is responsible.

that with respect to predictability, reason is not a fundamental condition for the first part of the proposition, however, rational action is closely related to the second, for it reflects choice and responsibility and at least a degree of self-fulfillment.

that the proposition is compatible with basic tenets of a political philosophy which emphasizes the rights and responsibilities of each individual not only as a free choosing agent, but also an agent responsible to others.

that in developing historical narrative, historians engage in a process of selection that is far from what is usually thought of as the scientific method, but that in fact might be quite compatible with one interpretation of what is meant by scientific; in either case, that once established, narrative can be treated as one treats any scientific hypothesis. The extent to which one might make a case for scientific method with respect to the historian's enterprise might be, and I think is, conditioned by the extent to which he is conscious of his prophetic function.



## Part II--Criticism

Introduction: In Part I we examined narrative as a phenomenon related to an "existential proposition" about human behavior. We noted that historians and philosophers, and some social scientists, often deal with human behavior in a manner which reflects a commitment to this kind of proposition. It was also suggested that in writing history for a particular social entity, an historian might be, consciously or unconsciously, helping that entity define itself in a manner which in turn affects its behavior. Narrative which is written about the entity for which it is being written or told has been defined herein as "prophetic narrative," or simply as the "existential model." The major objective in Part I was to spell out one way of looking at the nature and function of historical narrative. No explicit attempt was made to convince the reader that such a function should be promoted in our socio-historical context, although an attempt was made to present a case for accepting an existential proposition in looking at human behavior.

In Part II, I will discuss the existential model with respect to some of the issues and problems which I perceive in my world. The main objective in this section will be to point out the extent to which present thinking, both among historians and also among social studies educators, is lacking in sophistication with respect to the kinds of issues and problems that are raised in relation to the existential model. This will involve criticism on two fronts: (1) with respect to the general attitude and orientation toward history which seems to characterize many men, especially Americans, in the Western world today; and (2) with respect to the attitudes and orientations toward history which characterize historians and social studies educators.

There is, of course, no single attitude or orientation toward history, either in society at large or within any sizable segment thereof. There are however some generalizations which can be made about the way most Americans think about history, and since my work in curriculum development is grounded on my own interpretation of present attitudes and orientations toward history, this interpretation should be made explicit before discussing curriculum ideas themselves.

Most students find history texts irrelevant, except perhaps as academic obstacles to be hurdled before graduation. One need not do a statistical study to arrive at this conclusion. One need only stop a few students as they shuffle down the corridor from "history" to "science," or perhaps to something more relevant than either, "lunch." Today many, perhaps most, educators who command respect in the social studies area do not waste their time arguing about the merits of history textbooks in their traditional form--it is assumed that the texts are worthless in terms of the objectives for which they were written. The issue more often is whether the texts are harmful or harmless, and what might be done to develop something better. We have been told that there is a revolution underway in the social studies field. This revolution supposedly replaces the old approach



to history with more relevant approaches. One aim in this chapter is to briefly examine the nature and direction of changes now taking place in the social studies field. The central concern will be with the status of the existential model within the present "revolution." In attempting to establish one explanation for what is happening or not happening, as the case might be, we will look briefly at both the academic field of history and also the social studies area and consider both in relation to some of the events and circumstances which have made our world what it is today.

Approaches toward the nature and meaning of history, including this one, are subject to historical investigation and interpretation. The essay which follows is a brief historical analysis of present thinking (or more accurately a lack of thinking) on the subject of historical narrative. The interpretation which I will offer is itself a form of existential narrative; it is a particular selection and arrangement of historical data, an attempt to place the present in a rational context between past and future. More important for my own work, it is the "knowing" on which I base my actions, that is, to the extent that I can rationally explain my actions, including the writing of this paper. The interpretation is itself a basis for these actions. My frame of reference is primarily historical. I seek to understand attitudes and orientations toward history through looking at history. Part II, then, is closely related to Part I not only because it "speaks about" existential narrative as a phenomenon to be examined in present American thought, but also because it is existential narrative.

#### A. Falling Out of Love with History

Although most textbooks on American history still rest on assumptions about man and history which can be traced directly to George Bancroft, and on into the Enlightenment, innovators in the social studies area have turned away from history in the "grand style." The purpose of this essay is to suggest that much of the present innovation rests on assumptions about man and history that are at best superficial, and at worst naive and dangerous, perhaps a threat to the process of rational thought and action which they purport to promote. One assumption underlying this criticism is, to say the least, reactionary: Bancroft was essentially correct in his interpretation of historical development. Another assumption, a bit less reactionary, is that Bancroft must be reinterpreted--he must be made relevant to the age in which we live.

H. Stuart Hughes has indicated that today, "onto the plane of metahistory... ..almost no self-respecting historian will venture." He has also suggested that many historians are seeking a "philosophical grounding" in the social sciences, and that this endeavour is related to "an overwhelming and unprecedented intellectual confusion" which is characteristic of the present time."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "The Historian and the Social Scientist," in Crucial Issues In The Teaching of Social Studies, Massialas and Kazamias, eds. (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: 1964).

It is not my purpose to investigate the extent to which historians are, or are not, writing metahistory; it is my purpose, however, to examine the kinds of changes which are now taking place in the social studies curriculum.

In this essay the term "grand style" refers to those kinds of sweeping narrative which are often associated with a Bancroft, or perhaps with a Hegel. Such narrative is not only "meta" in suggesting a broad sweep, but also permeated with particular assumptions about the nature of man and history, assumptions about history as progressive, and man as a rational creature. Furthermore, there is an element of mysticism in this approach to the extent that Reason is grasped as a phenomenon that is progressively more manifest in the unfolding of time, and in the unfolding of man's historical consciousness through time. Textbooks still reflect one type of grand style history--that developed in the nineteenth century--but those educators today who are promoting this approach are hard to find, and when found, they are hard pressed to defend their ways. In the paragraphs which follow I hope to make a case for a return to some of the assumptions that permeate history in the grand style. I will not, however, try to defend the type of narrative, including the textbook, which was shaped by these assumptions in an earlier context.

One way of explaining the present situation in historiography is to construe it as a confrontation between the scientific orientation in modern scholarship and what is usually understood as the non-scientific nature of the Bancroftian enterprise. The increasing scientific orientation of our age has created serious problems for those who would employ Clio as a storyteller. When fully exposed to the criticisms of those who find her lacking in scientific methodology, at least as that methodology is generally understood,<sup>1</sup> Clio is forced to relinquish her hold.

But in discussing the way our age looks at history, we must do more than banter about science and subjectivity; we must look to history itself in order to understand the way men look at the past, as well as the way they treat it (or fail to treat it) as a phenomenon for study. The way men look at history is conditioned by events and circumstances within history, and it is my view that history itself has helped prepare for the demise of "history" in its grand style.

In the twentieth century historical narrative has helped create many of the horrors which are still fresh in the minds of all thinking man--propaganda

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<sup>1</sup> I am aware that the use of the term "science" creates some problems. We have spoken about some of these problems in Part I of this paper. See pages 21-25.

machines for the right and the left have had a busy time in recent years. Utilizing the techniques of mass communication, and often emphasizing "facts" which enhance the narrow interest of particular groups, historians and pseudo-historians alike have helped brew up some of the most terrible mythological porridge that mankind has ever tasted. In The Myth of the State, Ernst Cassirer exposes many of these evils: mythology, he notes, both in historical construction and in other forms, has become a fundamental challenge to the survival of "reason" as we have come to know it.<sup>1</sup> We are all aware of the indoctrination contained in historical texts. If one reads a Soviet account of communism, and then one reads about the same phenomenon in an American text, the point is clear. In many instances these kinds of history have violated culturally accepted standards of objectivity, but we must not forget that two histories could be written on the same subject, both true, yet fundamentally different because of the different standards of significance which influence a different arrangement of the data. Looking at the same picture, one historian might see a duck, the other a rabbit-- Morton White relates this point in a most interesting fashion:

The point is that one cannot see it simultaneously as both. At a given moment one sees it either as a duck or as a rabbit, and there is no ironical solution which would consist in saying that one should describe it as a hybrid called a "ruck" or a "dabbit." And just as the viewer of the duck-rabbit must at a given moment see it as either a duck or a rabbit, so there are some historians who are presented with a similar option that cannot be resolved by presentating a "Feffersonian" or a "Jederalist" history.<sup>2</sup>

The critic is correct in doubting Clio's objectivity, especially when sweeping narrative is the issue.

Skepticism has developed because of the political abuses which have become so obvious in our time. In this respect, the traditional text has often been criticized and put aside. Unfortunately, the baby has sometimes gone with the bath. During the past half-century, an acute awareness has developed over the problem of teaching "old myths" while facing "new realities." Historians have attempted to justify themselves in the increasingly scientific (or what is thought to be scientific) climate of our age, and they have often rejected the traditional storytelling approach. The problem here, as I see it, is that much of the traditional

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<sup>1</sup> New Haven: 1964.

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit., 268-69.



approach is less "mythological" and conversely more "historical" than is much of the new approach. We are all aware that the storyteller is involved in manipulating and molding, influencing the capacity to choose, broadening certain areas of choice, narrowing others; and in our awareness, we have, in what appears on the surface to be a rational response to a particular problem, sent Clio-as-Grand-Style-narrator scuttling to the corner. Some historians still seek to present the "big picture," but most historians have become skeptical about writing history that is obviously permeated with assumptions about man's rationality and the long-range progressive nature of historical change.

Perhaps the reasons for our present skepticism about grand style narrative (which is a form of prophetic narrative as we have discussed it) are even deeper, more fundamental, and less rational than indicated thus far; perhaps what has been said about a rational response is really better understood as rationalization. Are present attitudes and orientations toward the nature and function of narrative simply a reflection of a more sophisticated, scientific, rational approach to the world, or might they be something else?

Before attempting to answer this question directly, we must examine an issue which has thus far been obscured: the difference between mythological and historical orientations toward reality. In the above discussion we noted that Cassirer made a distinction between myth and reason. It is worth pausing for a moment to consider one possible way of viewing this matter.

Thinking which construes events and actions as unique phenomena existing in irreversible causal sequences is what I would assume to be historical thinking, reflecting historical consciousness. Non-historical consciousness is that mode of thinking in which events and actions are construed as functions of eternal, perhaps repetitive, essences. Historical consciousness is a recent "event" in the course of human affairs--indeed, although it is characteristic of some thinking in our day, it is, as it has been during its relatively short lifetime, not nearly as characteristic as non-historical consciousness.

Sometimes man's intellectual orientation is divided into three categories, animistic, religious, and scientific: animistic, when referring to experiencing the world as a breathing "thou," in which everything has a life soul; religious, when referring to experiencing the world as subject to forces and powers completely removed from, behind or above, the objects and events themselves--causation being grasped in terms of a deity, or deities, but not, as in animism, in-and-of the living objects and events themselves; and scientific, when experiencing reality as governed by impersonal laws, causal in-and-of themselves, but not personal as in the animistic mode.

Animism is clearly non-historical to the extent that it grasps reality as ever present and unchanging in its essence. For example, what many of us consider as irreversible and unique phenomena, like being born or dying, might be



perceived as accidents, or perhaps as repetitive elements of an eternal, unchanging essential truth, never past or future in the sense that most of us construe those terms. I maintain that a general progressive change has characterized Western man's historical journey during the past several millinia: at first men grasped reality animistically, then religiously, and finally scientifically. But this latter term is misleading, and is perhaps best understood in reference to the term Reason as it was used by Bancroft, and to some extent by Hegel. My position rests on an assumption that scientific thought today is really synomonous to historical thought. In this respect, I might have stated the above progression more accurately as a change involving animistic, religious, and historical modes of thinking.

According to Mircea Eliade, it has been only with great pain that humanity has come to tolerate history in the sense that we have defined it here: "archaic humanity...defended itself, to the utmost of its powers against all the novelty and irreversibility which history entails."<sup>1</sup> Likewise, religious man, to the extent that he insists on an eternal repetitive truth resists the encroachment of time consciousness as reflected in the historical mode of thinking. It was in religion, however, and more precisely in the Judeo-Christian tradition, that historical thinking had its beginning. This, in spite of the fact that the "...majority of so-called Christian populations continued, down in to our day, to preserve themselves from history by ignoring it and by tolerating it rather than by giving it the meaning of a negative or positive theophany."<sup>2</sup>

Eliade has stated that "modern man can be creative only insofar as he is historical."<sup>3</sup> I would take this a step further by suggesting that rational thought in our society and in our time is an absurd notion if not grasped in relation to historical consciousness. As is the case with so many things which we touch on in this paper, we cannot pursue the point to any rigorous conclusion. The purpose here is to set the stage for some critical remarks about some of the thinking that characterizes innovation in the social studies today. But we are getting ahead of ourselves in this discussion--it is appropriate that we spend a few moments examining ourselves as historical selves. We have already noted that the abuse of history in this century has contributed to its own decline at least in the narrative sense. What we have not touched on is the way in which men have come to view history in a particular manner not because of the way men have abused history, but rather because of the way in which history has abused men.

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<sup>1</sup> Cosmos and History, The Myth of the Eternal Return (1959 ed. ), 48.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 156.

Let me turn to Clio for a moment in an attempt to explain this point.

The Enlightenment helped secularize a Judeo-Christian conception of man's personal and collective involvement with divine forces in and behind historical movement. Although Enlightened views of man often pictured him as a static entity (subject to natural laws, natural rights, etc.), the idea of the machine in motion, the world mechanism, also contained the picture of man in motion, progressing both behind and in history. An Augustinian conception of man's involvement in temporal movement was forcefully woven into both the liberal-democratic and the Marxist ideological frameworks.

Many of the seventeenth and eighteenth century philosophers felt compelled to discredit the Augustinian side of this picture. In part this was because it was necessary to discredit the idea of man's special relatedness to a transcendent force which the Old Regime had claimed as the basis for "divine right." But during the nineteenth century, it became clear that the Augustinian spirit had not perished. God did not die, he simply emerged in new clothing: for some he was draped in a national flag, for others he appeared in a working class uniform. In looking at either Mazzini or Marx one finds an Augustinian (Hegelian) orientation that offered a sense of conceptual unity, a sense of historical direction, a sense of relatedness to the force which was thought to be behind and within history. The unity of the medieval world-view was not destroyed by Newton or Marx or Darwin for that matter; Newton's world-machine was replaced by Darwin's "organism," but there was no fundamental loss in the conception of man and history as making sense in some dynamic and unified way. (On the American scene, with the help of Spencer, the "chosen people" still could view themselves as chosen, only they used the term "fittest," which meant the same thing.) The phenomenon of which I write is no where better expressed than in Becker's The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers, where at one point he concludes that "... the Philosophes demolished the Heavenly City of St. Augustine only to rebuild it with more up-to-date materials." <sup>1</sup>

Lincoln, no less than Mazzini, took strength from a sense of relatedness in sweeping, progressive-linear historical change. Lincoln felt that he was responding to historical forces outside of himself, he was "chosen" to act--his deepest thoughts, only thinly veiled in formal speeches, were heavy laden with a sense of mysterious involvement in the spirit of history. <sup>2</sup> The nineteenth century, Western

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<sup>1</sup> New Haven: 1932, 31.

<sup>2</sup> Of the biographies written on Lincoln, Benjamin Thomas's is among the best dealing with the above mentioned theme (N.Y.: 1952).

conception of nation drew strength from a religious tradition which had pictured man in a linear historical process. The great revolutions of the late eighteenth century had stamped "earthly progress" on the otherwise other-worldly "package," but the new emphasis on reason and nature and especially man's role in relation thereto was no refutation of Augustine. "Natural law" never existed in the kind of historical vacuum that some scholars have attributed to it. Those "founding fathers" who preached natural law also preached the superiority of American institutions within an historical framework which smacked more of theism than deism. (It is no accident that John Wise, a Puritan preacher from Massachusetts, was one of the first to employ Locke in a defense of "natural rights.") Jefferson's farmer could not have been European, he was an American by virtue of his contact with American soil. The non-rational, Hegelian elements of national identity were powerful forces in eighteenth and nineteenth century thought. Liberals may often be plagued by the problem of the historical marriage between natural law and nationalism, but, as Louis Hartz and others have forcefully demonstrated,<sup>1</sup> the marriage was real, if at times difficult. In looking at American history, past and present, one finds in leading liberals, leading nationalists: how can one separate the two in a Jefferson, a Teddy Roosevelt, a Franklin Roosevelt, or a John Kennedy? The idea of an historical process guided by moral force, what Gabriel terms "moral law," a force beyond man's capacity or power to reason about it, has been and for some still is a central element in American history.<sup>2</sup> The universalism of the Enlightenment, especially as viewed in the American context, was at best one element in an ambivalent orientation toward man and his world. When Americans have spoken about "all men," they have not only been deceiving themselves, but also deceiving many who have attempted to understand them in retrospect. Principles, like those associated with natural law, are always part of some concrete historical circumstance; the nature of the historical framework which seemed to be part of "the American's" sense of identity, was closely related to an Augustinian notion of a unified spirit in and through historical change, but with a special manifestation in American history.

During the nineteenth century, certain political ideas and value orientations characterized the American, at least the white, Protestant American. These ideas and values were woven into the fabric of a particular historical setting.

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<sup>1</sup> See Hartz's treatment in both The Liberal Tradition, Op. cit., and also The Founding of New Societies, Op. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr's The Irony of American History (New York: 1952) is an important statement on this phenomenon. It should be considered along with Gabriel's classic study, The Course of American Democratic Thought (New York: 1956).



They constituted a conception about the nature and direction of human history: this conception was linear and progressive, it envisaged America at the crest of a west-bound wave of humanity, reaching onward toward the promised land, toward that time and place when all men would be blessed with salvation, material as well as spiritual, or more accurately, spiritual and material in one. This phenomenon was evident in the writings of Bancroft, the speeches of Lincoln, the moral lessons of McGuffey, and the texts of Francis Wayland.<sup>1</sup>

This is not simply what a few people were thinking and articulating in the earlier period. I speak here of a conception of reality which had force and value for thousands, nay millions, of men. The French and American Revolutions were important to Everyman. The principles of our democratic heritage (such as a belief in man's dignity and his ability to progress, both individually and collectively, within a system which promotes pluralism and protects its members through laws of their own making) were invested in a certain kind of historical consciousness, a sense of relatedness, a world-view involving immediate experiences in space and time. Rugged Individualism, the myths of Ben Franklin and Horatio Alger (as well as the myths about Napoleon and others who supposedly dwelt in sin), the sense of "mission" and "chosenness" which so often took the form of Manifest Destiny, these were part of the socio-historical manifestation which constituted for the average American his sense of identity. During the last century, this world view (including its contradictions) was taught, and it made sense, to most Americans (with major exceptions for Negroes and Indians). If one's parents were rugged individuals, one could be the same, and the environment was usually most obliging.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A close analysis of the sources themselves is the best way to document this kind of phenomenon, but a more practical, if less acceptable, procedure would be to examine secondary works like Commager's The American Mind (New Haven: 1950), and Henry May's The End of American Innocence (New York: 1959). I find these works to be instructive because they deal with nineteenth century ideas in the period of transition into the twentieth century.

<sup>2</sup> I have belabored the point, but I have done so with a purpose, for I mean to establish clearly the historical groundwork on which my views rest. I believe that there are some fundamental changes taking place in our society today, and in part these changes are taking place with respect to how men understand themselves as historical beings. It is important that my views about such changes be well established, for what I will later say concerning the social studies curriculum is related to the points I am now making about man's sense of identity in its historical setting.



Today, much of the old environment has been lost: the rural-agricultural setting which helped mold certain value orientations of a socio-economic nature has been attacked by the forces of urban-industrialism; ideas of chosenness and mission, once unquestioned by a majority of Americans, have been undermined by two world wars, along with Korea, Vietnam, and the haunting fear of total annihilation.

Who were the "rugged individuals" after the Crash?; where were the "chosen ones" after Hiroshima and Nagasaki?; what has happened to the Third Little Pig (Ben Franklin)? For many Americans these questions are real, if often more "felt" than articulated. Ahab is the issue here: once an exceptional character, even for the most critical intellectuals, he is now a sort of hero. The unifying ideas associated with nature and progress have lost much of their force in the new circumstances: the kind of socio-historical world-view which was taught in an earlier age has faltered in an urban-industrial atmosphere of world involvement. Reaction to yesterday's rather simple, and some say innocent, story about America's meaning in the historical process has been swift and sweeping.

I have spoken mainly of the temporal dimension in suggesting that the great synthesizing idea of progress has been challenged, but one could cut into this from the spatial angle. Turner started the debate when, at the turn of the century, he noted the closing of the frontier, and its possible implications for the American people, their values and their dreams. From a little different perspective, but still involving the spatial dimension, Lippmann has discussed the impact of change on the way Americans view themselves in relation to others:

. . . through most of the 19th Century the world capital was London. After the First World War, the world capitals were London and Washington. After the Second World War, the world capitals were Washington, Moscow, and London. Now the world capitals are Washington, Moscow, London, Peiking, Delhi, and, who knows, perhaps eventually, also Cairo.

We are in a wholly new situation. It is not a clearly visible situation with all its landmarks and features well defined. There are no reliable maps.

No one, I think, not even at the top of affairs and therefore on the inside of all the available information, can as yet see clearly, can as yet see as a whole, where we really are and where we ought to go. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "End of the Postwar World," New Republic (April 15, 1957).

How does one explain this? There is no single, and certainly no simple, explanation, but it is evident that rapid and fundamental changes have been taking place, and these changes have much to do with the way men view themselves in relation to events, circumstances, and other people both in the process of time and also in the context of space. C. Vann Woodward has offered an explanation in terms of a loss of "free security";<sup>1</sup> Hartz's thesis would suggest that the difficulties are closely related to our being a "liberal society" without self-understanding and consequently without the capacity to understand others;<sup>2</sup> McLuhan would take issue with both Woodward and Hartz by stressing the way in which media has influenced, nay determined, the course of human history.<sup>3</sup>

For better and for worse, much of the old, nineteenth century confidence has vanished. In The Measure of Man, Joseph Wood Krutch speaks about the way twentieth century Americans have accepted impotency as a fundamental part of their self-definition. His is not the voice of an alarmist: he speaks from experience, and with reason:

Two world wars and more than one third of a century lie between the last days of the Age of Confidence and the present moment. Many of us still living can, nevertheless, remember what a very different world was like; and we are aware, as younger men cannot be, how drastic and all-pervasive the change has been. Had you told us in 1914 what men would be thinking, believing and expecting in 1954, we should have found it harder to believe than the fantastic predictions of George Orwell are now.<sup>4</sup>

Some critics have said that this kind of interpretation lacks strength to the extent that change has always been present in human affairs, and that men have always been predicting doom or new life as the case might be, and that the younger generation has always acted this way, and so on. This may be so to some extent, but there is danger in taking this stance; there is danger to the extent that one might overlook what is unique in every historical situation. In order to deal rationally with the younger generation, we must be able to see what is different about

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<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., "Age of Reinterpretation."

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit.: Founding New Societies; Liberal Tradition.

<sup>3</sup> Understanding Media (New York: 1964).

<sup>4</sup> The Measure of Man (New York: 1953), 18.

their behavior as well as what might be universal. To view situations at different times as a matter of strict analogy is as dangerous to rational behavior as is the opposite extreme, that is, to see no similarities between one time and place and another. The kind of simplistic position stated in the first sentence of this paragraph is from this writer's viewpoint pure rationalization, more dangerous than enlightening. It smacks more of escape than rational involvement. (If nothing else, the change in change, in its raw rate, is a major change in our time. )

As educators we no longer speak of the older world-view with the confidence of a Teddy Roosevelt. Most of us are not only aware of the weaknesses of the old social mythology, but often a bit ashamed of the fact that it ever existed at all; we fear an association with simple-minded positions on both the right and the left, positions which have scarred our world in recent decades. Thus within the ranks of social studies educators, and in the intellectual community at large, the mid-twentieth century has witnessed a reaction to historical narration as a vehicle for conveying social values and attitudes, and as an instrument for shaping social behavior. In the name of science, and in the name of democratic pluralism many have turned away from the big historical picture. But added to this rational concern, and the scientific bias on which it rests, is the fact that many have simply fallen out of love with history. Part of the older picture was saturated with man's view of himself in a progressive and unitary process of historical change. Much of this dream has spoiled in our time--history has betrayed us. Love is subject to "negative reinforcement," and the negative aspects of recent Western history have played no small part in creating an atmosphere of despair and skepticism with respect to the way men view history and themselves in relation to it. With all of the irrationality of the man who hates women because he was once betrayed, we have to some extent blindly rejected the past.

Itself viewed in historical perspective, it seems that the kind of falling out of love which has characterized much American thinking about the nature and meaning of history has been likewise characteristic of other Western peoples. The West, we have been told (and many of us believe), is in a period of relative decline, at least in relation to the non-Western areas which were long dominated by the West itself. It seems natural, given this view of historical development, that Western attitudes and orientations toward the nineteenth-century, Hegelian historical conception would be profoundly shaken, and perhaps in some instances destroyed.<sup>1</sup>

We have been told that ours is an age of anomie, anxiety, and alienation; that we are "hollow men," afloat on the sea of modernity, that our "gyroscopes"

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of this decline, see Heilbroner's The Future as History (New York: 1959).



are faulty. Some critics insist that modern man is attempting to "escape from freedom"; still others claim that history is neurosis and that mankind is bent on proving it. Many sketches of the modern condition --scientific and otherwise-- seem to have one thing in common: that discontinuity and disorientation are characteristic of twentieth century experience, that change is the new constant in our environment. Charles Frankel speaks for a majority of the critics when he states that we live at a time in which the ". . . procession of human affairs is. . . cut up into a series of shocks and crises, torn loose from their contexts, with only a brief past behind them and a melodramatic future ahead. . ." <sup>1</sup>

It is almost trite to speak about the impact of scientific and technological advances. Revolutions in transportation and communication have produced quantitative changes which move rapidly into qualitative realms. Never before have so many ideas, institutions, and value orientations been so violently and dramatically dated in such short periods of time; cultural roots have been snatched from the soil which nourished them; continuity and self-recognition have been undermined in a half-century of war and revolution. To speak of cultural lag in this context is to speak in understatement. In Erikson's terms, one might construe the present in terms of a series of collective identity crises. <sup>2</sup>

William Barrett, looking at modern man's condition with an eye to his philosophical life, comments on this problem in relation to existentialism. In his analysis he notes that the "central fact of modern history in the West. . . is unquestionably the decline of religion." By this Barrett does not simply mean that men have stopped going to church; he means that the secular has replaced the religious as the fundamental source of man's identity. But Barrett is not simply speaking of the political state; he is speaking more about the way man experiences himself in relation to the state of nature, the state of things, the state of the world. He suggests that a fundamental shift has taken place in the way man perceives himself in his world; Western man no longer perceives all objects, including himself, as existing in relation to a more fundamental state of being, that is the eternal Being, the spirit which lives behind and through all that is; Western man, Barrett tells us, "has spent more than five hundred years. . . stripping nature of these projections and turning it into a realm of neutral objects which his science may control." The major point which he makes here is that the change has involved a psychological upheaval:

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<sup>1</sup> The Democratic Prospect (New York: 1962), 75.

<sup>2</sup> Erikson usually uses the term "identity" in reference to growth and development of an individual; however, he does suggest that there is a sense in which one might speak of "collective identity." See Insights and Responsibility: Lectures on The Ethical Implications of Psychoanalytic Insight (New York: 1964), 93.



Religion to medieval man was not so much a theological system as a solid psychological matrix, surrounding the individual's life from birth to death, sanctifying and enclosing all its ordinary and extraordinary occasions in sacrament and ritual. The loss of the Church was the loss of a whole system of symbols, images, dogmas, and rites which had the psychological validity of immediate experience, and within which hitherto the whole psychic life of Western man had been safely contained. <sup>1</sup>

Ernst Cassirer speaks of twentieth century man's "loss of conceptual unity." His remarks are apropos to the "falling out of love" phenomenon:

No former age was ever in such a favorable position with respect to the sources of our knowledge of human nature. Psychology, ethnology, anthropology, and history have amassed an astoundingly rich and constantly increasing body of facts. Our technical instruments for observation and experimentation have been immensely improved, and our analyses have become sharper and more penetrating. We appear, nevertheless, not yet to have found a method for mastery and organization of this material. When compared with our own abundance the past may seem very poor. But our wealth of facts is not necessarily a wealth of thoughts. Unless we can succeed in finding a clue of Ariadne to lead us out of this labyrinth, we can have no real insight into the general character of human culture; we shall remain lost in a mass of disconnected and disintegrated data which seem to lack all conceptual unity. <sup>2</sup>

This phenomenon, our being "lost in a mass of disconnected and disintegrated data which seems to lack all conceptual unity," is not simply a theoretical problem, a problem for philosophers to speculate about, but rather it involves human survival itself.

One could proceed ad infinitum with analyses that, although from different viewpoints, share the common assumption that Western man has been experiencing a fundamental shift in his sense of identity. What is important for the position

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<sup>1</sup> It should not be forgotten, however, that while Barrett sees this process as a loss in man's security, there is a related gain in man's capacity to control nature and himself as part of nature. Many critics, like Cassirer and Fromm, see the major "loss" as a phenomenon of the twentieth century. Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy (NY: 1962), 24-25.

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit., Essay 22.

which I will be developing on the social studies curriculum is that all of these critics are attempting to understand what has happened to man in history, and as history; they share Ortega's assumption that "man is his history," and they seek to understand what is happening on the basis of that assumption. Even when one holds that we will transcend the limits of our historical circumstance, we are still confirming those limits, the uniqueness of history that made them, and the history that in us makes us seek to transcend history or perhaps to deny transcendence.

It strikes me that too little has been written about this "falling out of love" with respect to the problem of historical consciousness itself. It is possible that much of the present thinking about the past, and the future, is actually non-historical in nature, and perhaps this is the case not in spite of attempts to make history a social science, but because of such attempts. I do not want to suggest that nobody (but me of course) thinks historically, but I do want to point to a very real possibility, and one that is perhaps being realized to some extent in our day: the possibility of the surrendering of historical consciousness as an historical event in our time.

It has been noted that many men have experienced a breakdown in conceptual unity, especially in their grasp of reason and progress (and their relation thereto) as unifying forces in history. On the rational side of this picture, a side characterized by sound historical thinking, it appears that the raw and rapid rate of change has created an almost impossible task for those who would understand what is happening. Add to this the nature of what has been happening in our world, the negative side, and it seems that the interpretation of history as non-rational and non-progressive is quite valid, and solidly within the realm of historical consciousness itself. I maintain, however, that the present situation is not simply a rational response to complexity, change, and volume, or simply a response to the dangers of subjectivity and indoctrination, or a response to the happenings of history; it involves a definite shift, at least within the Western world, in the way in which men, including historians and educators, define themselves. In part this has been an unconscious and irrational response; there has been, and there is today, a tendency for men to regress (and I use that term fully conscious of its psychological implications) to non-historical modes of thinking. We are living at a time when our traditional sense of historical involvement has been shaken so fundamentally that the very nature of that involvement seems to have been altered. The "Modern Temper," a "loss of conceptual unity," "collective identity crisis," the "end of innocence," "death of God," "falling out of love," call it what you will, the phenomenon is deep within our presence as historical beings, and there are clear signs of its manifestation in our times.

At a later point we will look at some of the positive elements in this phenomenon, but before doing this, let us look at the way many historians and educators have responded, and contributed, to the "falling out of love with history."

B. "Written History as An Act of Fear"

In addressing himself to what he refers to as a "crisis in the humanities," J. H. Plumb comments on recent historiography as existing in an "atmosphere" which has become "exceedingly inimical to the idea of progress as the synthesizing idea of human history." This atmosphere, he notes, has thickened as the twentieth century has unfolded.

. . . events gave it hammer blows: the First World War, the Somme, Verdun, Passochendaele, millions of slaughtered men; the Second World War with millions more and the interval made macabre by Hitler and his maniac persecution of the Jews; the monomania of Stalin and his purges. And, let us face it, Hiroshima.

As a consequence of these complex and interacting phenomena, Plumb thinks that ". . . fewer and fewer historians believe that their art has any social purpose: any function as a co-ordinator of human endeavour or human thought." This he thinks has resulted in a declining sense of "social purpose," and a diminishing educational value for Clio. The profession has become dedicated to a type of history which is of little social value ("the theory of total recall") at precisely the time when men are seeking some new, meaningful synthesis ("At least Toynbee gives them answers; bogus and absurd they may be, but at least they attempt to explain."). Plumb thinks that the present attitude is not only dangerous, but also "intellectually shallow." <sup>1</sup>

It is my contention that Plumb's view has much validity. When applied to the American scene, there are important exceptions which should be noted <sup>2</sup>, but the central point is valid. The idea of progress as a synthesizing principle in historical writing, naive as it might have been originally cast, has indeed been pushed aside as an organizing concept in historical research and writing. What is not being written and said in this respect is perhaps more significant than what is.

Every historian knows that his construction of the past is loaded with assumptions and implications about the nature of man and history. This is as true for those who spin monographs as it is for those who speculate in the realm of metahistory. In fact, there are usually some very interesting differences in assumptions about man and history depending on whether an historian does write

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<sup>1</sup> "The Historian's Dilemma," Crisis in the Humanities, J. H. Plumb (ed.) (Baltimore Maryland: 1964), 24-44.

<sup>2</sup> The "new social studies," for example, is an explicit attack on the "theory of total recall."



monographs or metahistory. Yet it is a fact of our time that in the training of academic historians relatively little effort is given to the exploration of these basic considerations.

A number of scholars within the historical guild have commented on the paucity of rigorous thinking in this area. David Potter points out that even though most historians are aware that important assumptions and implications underly all historical generalization, professional training offers relatively little time or stimulus for examining this aspect of historiography.<sup>1</sup> With respect to metahistory, where the existential model (prophetic narrative) would no doubt be classified, there can be little doubt that present thinking is basically a kind of avoidance, or non-thinking. In this area, of course the ground is empirically soft, the nonscientific elements blatantly evident, and for those who desire to make history respectable as a social science (at least in one generally accepted view of what social science should entail), there is little desire to even discuss the issue. Also, there are enough "way out" theorists, like Toynbee, to allow most thinkers a ready excuse for not grappling seriously with the problem. <sup>2</sup>

Given the events and circumstances of recent history, which have contributed to the rational as well as the irrational aspects of the present atmosphere, it is not strange to find confusion and drift in those areas where Clio long dominated the scene in her story-telling role, specifically in the area of social studies education. Today, people in general and educators in particular have become disillusioned with history as a subject of study as well as with history in the broader sense of that term. Narrative history has been especially vulnerable. What has happened, I believe, is that in correctly assessing the naivete of the Enlightenment conception of human reason and historical progress, and in raising good questions about some of the mythological elements in that conception, we have over-reacted, and we have sometimes lost sight of the constructive, historical assumptions which it contained.

One can see in Bancroft's narrative both religious and also historical understanding. In this respect, grand style narrative did not affect a sharp break with the past. In thinking historically, the Hebrew prophets attributed process and change to an omnipotent force beyond man's reach; Augustine colored Christian thought with a similar causal conception; and even Hegel, to whom I have attributed a positive contribution for advancing man's grasp of his own rational involvement in time, viewed causation in terms of forces that moved man, not vice versa.

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1 From "Explicit Data and Implicit Assumptions in Historical Study," in Louis Gottschalk, ed., Generalization in the Writing of History (Chicago: 1963), 186 - 187.

2 H. Stuart Hughes has commented on some of the negative aspects in this trend. Op. cit., "The Historian and the Social Scientist."



On the nineteenth century American scene, however, one can clearly see a growing consciousness of man's own place in the causal chain. In Bancroft, for example, we find both the religious and also the historical modes of thinking. In speaking about the founding of the United States, he asked: "Do nations float darkling down the stream of the ages without hope or consolation, swaying with every wind and ignorant whither they are drifting? or, is there a superior power of intelligence and love which is moved by justice and shapes their course?" This would seem to indicate his concern for the eternal truth of God, a truth manifested in historical unfolding. On the other hand, in speaking directly of the founding of the Constitution of the United States, he noted: "The American constitution is the most wonderful work ever struck off at a given time by the brain and the purpose of man." Thus, while Bancroft was concerned with the Law behind man's capacity to reason, the Law as fixed in the grand design of the Creator, he nevertheless conveyed an unmistakable picture of man in the act of creation.

E. H. Carr has suggested that man's capacity to reason and to think historically (which go hand in hand) developed as "natural," seasonal, cyclical conceptions of time gave way to trans-natural conceptions. This phenomenon, he notes, was, and is, directly related to the great industrial revolution that has transformed the West and the world in modern times. It is informative for my purposes to note that Carr, in seeking an example of rational, historical thought, turns to the American scene in the nineteenth century and, after quoting part of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, notes that:

...Lincoln's words suggest...a unique event--the first occasion in history when men deliberately and consciously formed themselves into a nation, and then consciously and deliberately set out to mould other men into it. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries man had already become fully conscious of the world around him and of its laws. They were no longer the mysterious decrees of an inscrutable providence, but laws accessible to reason. But they were laws to which man was subject, and not laws of his own making. In the next stage man was to become fully conscious of his power over his environment and over himself and of his right to make the laws under which he would live. <sup>1</sup>

It is this "next stage" which I think must command attention in our time, for it is my assessment that in some important respects we are in danger of letting ourselves slide back into the mode of thinking which was characteristic of previous stages.

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<sup>1</sup> Op. Cit., 180.

Frederick Jackson Turner advanced the American's rational, historical understanding of himself to the extent that he correctly assessed the impact of the frontier on American history; at the same time, however, he opened dangerous avenues of thought to the extent that many men could thus view all of American history (and perhaps all history) as a process in which men automatically responded to forces outside of themselves, in this case to frontier forces. By the same token, Charles Beard (in his earlier writings) presented a picture of the past which liberated many to a new level of understanding in the rational, historical sense; yet, he likewise opened dangerous avenues of thought to the extent that many men could thus view all of American history (and perhaps all history) as a process in which men automatically responded to forces outside themselves, in this case to economic forces. What I find dangerous in Turner and Beard is something that is both in their writing and also in my perception of that which they have written. What is dangerous is the tendency to underplay man's existential role in the present, in one's presence.

In recognizing this problem, at least implicitly, many of our finest historians "permit" men of the past to act in a certain manner, but deny such behavior to men in the present. For example, let us consider for a moment Richard Hofstadter's thesis in The Age of Reform. It is my understanding that he attributes to class a major determining force in the causal sequence that produced Progressivism. He suggests that many middle class Americans at the turn of the century were anxious to preserve, or recapture (or perhaps invent) what they thought to be a "golden age." Hofstadter notes that today we might "sympathize" with them, but that we cannot share in that outlook, for it "...is no longer within our power."<sup>1</sup> The point here is that there is no turning back for historical man; there is nothing in the past that can in fact serve as a golden age in the present or future; there is, in short, no mythological escape, except at the expense of reason, and therefore at the expense of history, and perhaps at the expense of civilization.<sup>2</sup>

In order to extend the area of choice and predictive power with respect to what lies ahead, we must grasp the present in relation to that which it is not, the past and the future. Furthermore, the nature of that extension is conditioned by

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<sup>1</sup> The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F. D. R. (New York: 1955), 328.

<sup>2</sup> I am suggesting here that the situation is one of choosing to interpret the world mythologically or historically, but there might in fact be other options. Norman O. Brown has taken an interesting and provocative position, suggesting that there is a way out of history through psychoanalysis. See: Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History (Wesleyan University: 1959); and Love's Body (New York: 1966).

historical considerations, one consideration being one's own self-definition; because we are historical beings, we must continually remind ourselves that words such as reason and freedom must be viewed in relation to historical circumstance. This, of course, could not be otherwise, and what is really the issue here is a matter of degree and emphasis. Given the nature of Western institutions, it would seem that individuals with the most freedom will also have the greatest capacity to think historically, for only through viewing oneself in relation to an historical yesterday, can one even begin to exercise rational choice in relation to an historical tomorrow.

It is my contention that much of the innovation in social studies education today tends to obscure something that was powerfully present in grand style narrative, and something that was present in those who were affected by that narrative. Historical definition involving reason and progress are not the only, or even the central, issues in this respect: what was so powerfully woven into the narrative was a sense of being, a presence, a process of change that was pictured as urgent and dramatic; grand style history conveyed an element of the prophetic in the Old Testament sense, and this element provided readers with a dynamic orientation toward the past and the future. It provided a conceptual unity and thus helped men transcend their immediate place.

When I first wrote this paper, some of my readers warned me that the criticisms which I offered about the present historiographical scene were perhaps a bit extreme, if not totally unfounded. I had suggested, for example, that "most who are writing history today, do so out of an act of fear rather than an act of faith." It appears to me that the criticism of my criticism was in fact correct. Most historians do not write history out of an act of fear; in fact, I find among historians in general a deep faith in man's rational-historical capacities. I am nonetheless convinced that there is a problem here, and one with which historians and educators should be concerned. There is always a need for us to remind each other that freedom and choice are not entirely extrinsic phenomena. This need is especially felt in times of great upheaval and change, for in such times men often seek a return to earlier modes of thinking. Today, in the twentieth century, change has not treated Western man with great respect, and in much of our thinking there is a tendency to surrender historical involvement. Historians and philosophers of history are aware of this fact. I will let E. H. Carr make the point:

It is...not the waning of faith in reason among the intellectuals and the political thinkers of the English-speaking world which perturbs me most, but the loss of the pervading sense of a world in perpetual motion. This seems at first sight paradoxical; for rarely has so much superficial talk been heard of changes going on around us. But the significant thing is that change is no longer thought of as achievement, as opportunity, as progress, but as an object of fear.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., 208.



It is my contention that historians and educators alike should start thinking about one fact above all others, the historical fact of their own stance in relation to their subject.

Of those historians who have spoken on this issue, none has stated the case more cogently than C. Vann Woodward. His article, "The Age of Reinterpretation," is one of the finest recent statements concerning the challenges which present history holds for the historian himself. Woodward states that our age is ripe for reinterpretation, and he criticizes his colleagues for their lethargy on this matter. There are three historical areas in which, according to C. Vann Woodward, recent events and circumstances have produced a need for reinterpretation: "the first occasioned by: the end of the age of free and effective security in America, the second by the end of an age of mass warfare, and the third by the end of the age of European hegemony."

It is important to note that these suggested areas of reinterpretation do not reflect a disinterested approach to the problems of recent history: in calling for new interpretations based on the "end of an age of mass warfare," for example, he is hardly referring to scientific fact, he is placing his own interpretative construction over twentieth century history and thereby attempting to influence the future. In suggesting that mass warfare has ended, Woodward is actually entering into history with a wish, a wish which is implicitly related to his symbolic construction of what should be, and hopefully what will be (in part because it is willed). He is, in the very act of writing his essay, attempting to make history through his interpretation of it. This is his project, and to carry out his desires, he asks his colleagues to share in his values and assumptions about the good world, and to write history accordingly.

Upset with the dwindling emphasis on the story-telling function in present historical scholarship, C. Vann Woodward offers the following remarks:

The historian sometimes forgets that he has professional problems in common with all story-tellers. Of late he has tended to forget the most essential one of these--the problem of keeping his audience interested. So long as the story he had to tell contained no surprises, no unexpected turn of events, and lacked the elemental quality of suspense, the historian found his audience limited mainly to other historians, or captive students. While the newly dawned era adds new problems of its own to the historian's burden, it is lavish with its gifts of surprise and suspense for the use of the story-teller.

He asks historians to accept their calling as narrators with a vital social function; he asks them to use their minds as weapons against the forces that threaten mankind: "What is required is an answer to the questions about the past and its relation to the present and future that the accelerated process of history raises."



If historians do not seek to answer these questions, they might well qualify for Tolstoi's definition of academic historians: "...deaf men replying to questions that nobody puts to them." <sup>1</sup>

Another outstanding critic-historian on the American scene, Page Smith, is disturbed, almost to the point of bitterness, with his colleagues' failure to recognize their responsibilities in helping society achieve a meaningful sense of identity. He thinks that historians have a moral obligation to consciously enter into history: "The historian is existentially involved in history, or he is nothing." With respect to American historical scholarship, Smith states openly what Woodward leaves implicit:

We have reached the point of diminishing returns in the research and writing of American history. If anyone doubts this, he has only to compare the quality of articles which appeared in the early years of the American Historical Review with those of, say, the last decade. We have better training, more resources, more monographs, more historians, and generally speaking, worse history. American historians need a new concept of their task. They have trampled around in their own back yard too long, stumbling over one another and working and reworking an increasingly arid soil. It may thus be hoped that they will be favorably inclined toward a new orientation.

Smith is very critical of present attempts to make history into a science. He feels that the historian's relativity and subjectivity are the source of his relevance, and it is "...only by being relevant to his day and age that the historian has the remotest chance of being relevant to any future day." On the issue of objectivity, his bitterness is hardly concealed: the historian's "...whoring after objectivity is a death wish in disguise--disguised as a desire for a kind of immortality to be won, hopefully, by escaping from history, by getting 'outside' and thus being as true tomorrow as today, by being, in other words, like God Himself."

Smith's existential commitment is that historians should take a stand for mankind by writing "universal history." He says that the "overriding theme" for the century ahead is the "unity of mankind." Referring to this as a goal, he explores the ways in which historians might contribute their share in making it a reality. Specifically he calls for an end of "national histories," at least as they have been written in the past, and the beginning of a new kind of history, "...the common history of mankind in which new nations take their proper place."

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<sup>1</sup> "The Age of Reinterpretation," American Historical Review, LXVI (1960), 1-19.

Somewhat carried away with his own mission, Smith seems to imply that his "universal history" is somehow more true than other "histories" which might be lurking within the present. There is no doubt that some kind of universality would appear to be imminent; that man's relations with his fellow man are rapidly extending with respect to their encompassing nature; and that in this sense, Smith is correct in noting that the "national histories" are not as real today as universal history. But to speak of "one mankind" is not the equivalent of Smith's "universal history." Interdependence in terms of scientific and technological innovation has become a fact in twentieth century life and appears to be part of a far reaching process, but it is not an irreversible process, nor is it necessarily progressive. "One mankind" could well refer to "one dead mankind" as much as to "one living mankind," as far as any "overriding theme" for the future is concerned. What Smith has failed to make explicit in his brief discussion of this issue is the part which symbolic investment plays in shaping the nature of things. This investment is in part shaped by one's values and dreams --there are some men who would rather invest in universal destruction than to surrender their nationalism, and thus whether a nation is in its "proper place" or not depends on how one defines "proper." If in fact Smith is correct in pointing to some automatic unfolding of the future, if this is what he is saying and if this is true, then the existential model would appear to have little value, as would Smith's own statements about the nature of universal history.

But this problem in Smith's reasoning does not diminish the power of his basic position, which is that there are important decisions to be made concerning the kinds of history that people will be asked to read, decisions which will affect the way Americans and non-Americans alike will construe their worlds, and decisions which will perhaps lead to behavior which will in turn reflect the commitments of those making the decisions. If Smith has exaggerated in behalf of the existential approach, if he has at times forgotten to qualify his own existential commitment, he certainly has done so with good reason, for in recent years most historians have completely neglected Clio in her story-telling role.<sup>1</sup>

Both Smith and Woodward address themselves to a general trend in modern historical scholarship--a trend away from the grand style narrative discussed herein. There are important exceptions to this trend, we have mentioned some of them, but even these appear problematical with respect to the purposes for which they were written. The Hartzes, Hofstadters, Handlins, Potters, and McNeills--even these rare finds on the bookshelf of modern scholarship are lacking in the kind of story-telling qualities which would make them significant for any large segment of our population. How many Americans could be expected to read the Liberal Tradition or the Rise of the West and internalize the existential message contained therein? Another question, of course, is how many

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<sup>1</sup> Page Smith, The Historian and History (N.Y., 1964), references pp. 221-231.

Americans should be reading and internalizing such messages. With respect to the social studies curriculum, the "should" question is as important as the "could" question. Before we examine either of these, however, let us briefly explore some of the general attitudes and approaches toward history within the social studies area itself.

### C. Clio in the Classroom

Most social studies innovation today is designed to promote the disciplines--that is, emphasis is on teaching organizing concepts and intellectual processes as found in the various social sciences. In the name of the new prophet, Jerome Bruner, social studies educators are now developing courses in psychology, economics, anthropology, geography, history, etc., all of which help students learn, or I should say "discover," the processes of the respective disciplines. For example, one no longer teaches students the conclusions at which historians have already arrived; rather one has the students go through the process by which historians arrive at conclusions.<sup>1</sup> The key word is how, not what.

Why emphasize the how, rather than the what? There are several general answers which are often given. First, in an age of exploding intellectual horizons, when data can be compiled faster than men can interpret it, the problem of volume is obvious, and the related problem of making rational decisions based on a command of facts is equally obvious. Ours is a world of specialization, we can no longer dream of knowing all that there is to know--not even within the confines of a single discipline. In short, we cannot teach content. A second reason why recent concern has been given to the how rather than the what is related to the political philosophy upon which our society rests, one tenet of which is that authority and choice arise from within each individual. In recent years we have tasted many of the evils that indoctrination has produced, and we have come to recognize that our political philosophy and educational practice have long been at odds. Historically the educational system grew from philosophical foundations quite antithetical to those of the Declaration of Independence--early education rested on a trickle-down notion of authority and knowledge. This was true in practice, if not in theory. Most of us can no longer accept the idea of pouring truth into the child (perhaps the volume problem contributed to this change), and we now seek to make it possible for children to acquire a variety of skills and concepts which will allow them to make their own decisions.

A third reason for the new approach is that it is supposed to be more motivational to learn "how" than it is to learn "what"; and perhaps a fourth is that the

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<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that historians and social studies educators have not simply "followed" Bruner; much of the initiative for the new approach has come from within the various areas.



whole process is supposed to be "transferable." Many reasons could be added, and to some extent, in keeping with our existential proposition, such reasons should be considered to be causes as well, but this is not always the case. The first point which I mentioned in this respect is probably both cause and also reason: complexity and volume have encouraged us to re-examine our approach. The next three appear to be reasons more than causes: the new approach is supposedly more democratic, motivational, and transferrable. In thinking about the causes of the revolution, one should keep in mind some of the points which I have already made about the "falling out of love" phenomenon--those points suggest some of the degree to which much of the present revolution is in fact an irrational response to the challenges we face.

By letting the student learn some of the general concepts and processes through which the social scientist approaches the mass of data with which he is confronted, the new social studies would thus let the student learn to organize what he perceives just as the social scientist does. The student would then be able to draw conclusions and make generalizations based on the data available to him. To put this in a nutshell, I quote Edwin Fenton:

The structure of the social studies disciplines--their mode of inquiry if you prefer--makes up the single most important criterion for the selection of content in the new social studies curricula. Only if a student knows how to inquire can he cope with the knowledge explosion.<sup>1</sup>

If successful in its major objective, the new social studies will help the individual move into the world and organize it with a conceptual frame and with certain skills, but not with the dangerous illusion that he somehow knows a given subject or a content area. The assumption is that the data will change, but the organizing processes will prevail as a radar system in an ocean of complexity and volume. Students will thus be in a continual process of discovery.

There is much merit in the new approach, and my purpose here will not be to discredit the positive aspects of what Fenton, Richard Brown, and others have been doing. There is one serious problem in the thinking of these men however, and in developing any social studies curriculum it should be taken into consideration. Accepting the idea that volume, complexity, and change constitute serious challenges to the traditional "teach the content" approach, and accepting the fact that we want individuals to be free to choose, rather than to be indoctrinated with preconceived choices, we might ask if the new approach is really an effective means for gaining our objectives. Which is to say, although we might accept

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1 "The New Social Studies," The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, Vol. 51, No. 317, 67.



the social criticism and the objectives of the new social studies thinking, we might question the procedures, the lesson plan. <sup>1</sup>

One of the best criticisms of the new social studies comes from Donald Oliver and James Shaver.<sup>2</sup> They point out that most problems and issues confronting the members of our society are not handled through disciplinary channels, even though such channels might be of value in confronting important problems and issues; they point out that democratic decision making, in both the public and private sense of that phrase, involves the resolution of value conflict in a way which is not subject to the "processes" and "organizing concepts" of scientific disciplines. When, for example, "equal opportunity" clashes with "property rights" the person making a decision must take his stand on matters of fact, value, and opinion, and the final choice is seldom determined by scholarly, disciplinary considerations. (This is not to suggest that they do not stress "disciplinary" thinking, for they do in the sense that one disciplines one's mind to handle issues of controversy in a particular way, according to a particular model.) In their "public issues" approach, they do not seek to discredit the social sciences; in fact they encourage the use of social science findings. However, they would maintain that the disciplines as such are needed only where students are being prepared to become disciplinarians, and certainly not as part of their general education. Oliver and Shaver seek to establish a social studies, not a social science, curriculum.

Where should the emphasis be in the social studies approach? Oliver and Shaver call for a case study approach, based on important social issues, with special consideration for the rational thought process (as they construe it) which is necessary in making distinctions between facts, values, and opinions. With an emphasis on the how to think rather than the what, they are, like the new social studies advocates, concerned with the problem of volume and complexity; they do not, however, accept the new social studies proposals on how best to achieve rational thought in a democratic society. They stress a set of values, the most basic being "human dignity"--which is purposefully vague--and emphasize a process by which decisions entail a continual redefinition of said values. Thus conceptions of "private property" and "equal opportunity" might change over a period of years, depending on the particular "case." The

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<sup>1</sup> One of the issues here is related to the problem which educators have in figuring out just what is meant by "structure" and "process." I speak to this issue in this paper only indirectly; that is by suggesting a way of thinking, a way of approaching the subject of history and the substance of history, which raises some doubts about the validity of the disciplinary approach.

<sup>2</sup> Teaching Public Issues in the High School (Boston: 1966).

most central value, "human dignity," is a constant in this system, as is a commitment to democratic political processes.

I believe that this criticism of the new social studies is valid. Each of the positions just mentioned, however, has virtues which the other lacks. The new social studies can offer a dimension that is lacking in the Oliver and Shaver approach. By the same token, the latter position compensates for some potentially serious shortcomings in the former. Where in the new social studies can we find an approach to public issues and problems of value conflict and choice like that which we find in the Oliver-Shaver position?; on the other hand, what better way might one have for developing an understanding of values than through a unit or course in anthropology?

My basic criticism of both, however, is that they seem to lack a sophisticated understanding of the nature and potential utility of historical reconstruction as an existential phenomenon. Each of the above reflects to some extent what I have herein discussed as an irrational reaction to events and circumstances which have dramatically shaken the century in which we live. Oliver and Shaver, and others who have developed case materials, have provided some of the necessary ingredients for helping students think historically. However, they have not provided the stimulus for helping students grasp themselves, define themselves, as historical agents. The more sophisticated approaches to "rational thinking" recognize the importance of unique, causal sequences in historical unfolding, but they do not seem to recognize the importance of the agent's orientation in and toward those sequences. They do, of course, recognize the need to have the agent invest in the subject--and thus they "doctor up" the cases appropriately--but this concern seldom touches on the kinds of issues we have raised in this report. In the following paragraphs (and to some extent in Part III), I will attempt to clarify this assertion.

As already noted, in the new social studies the emphasis given history is primarily on the disciplinary aspects of the historian's craft, rather than on the inter-disciplinary nature of historical interpretation and involvement itself. Although there is much potential, within Fenton's approach, for exploring the kinds of issues which have been raised in this paper, there is little indication that those directing the revolution are concerned with the way in which present history, including their own approach to "history," can and should be grasped as part of the individuals historical unfolding. It is this grasp which is the goal of the prophetic narrator--it is this grasp which the new social studies people are unable and/or unwilling to discuss.

Jerome Bruner has offered some stimulating direction for educators in many areas, but he sheds little light on the nature of historical narrative; indeed, from this vantage point, he obfuscates the educational issues. For example, while on the one hand he advocates an approach to history which would encourage students to arrive at their own historical interpretations, on the other hand he

speaks of the ". . . power of great organizing concepts. . ." and their ability to ". . . predict or change the world in which we live." <sup>1</sup> Implicit in many of his statements is the idea that there are such things as organizing concepts, and that these are somehow good for people because they help people organize experience and the world. (This view, along with his general position on "structure," <sup>2</sup> are in no way contradictory to some of the most basic assumptions which have been made in this paper, although the emphasis on structure herein has been away from any disciplinary area per se.) What is troublesome in the Bruner approach, as reflected in the approaches of Fenton and those working with the Amherst materials, is the extent to which it fails to recognize the difficulties of clumping "great organizing ideas" with their expectations for producing student-historians. These phenomena are not necessarily, or even probably, complimentary. It would seem that unless historical content were highly structured in advance--in which case the historians involved would structure and organize for the students--the student-historian approach would be a rather inefficient means to gaining the insights which professional historians have struggled to develop, insights which would appear to be related to the best "organizing concepts" in the field (like those offered by C. Vann Woodward in the essay we have examined in this paper). What inevitably takes place, of course, is that the professionals select some area and some documents for the students to study, and then allow them to "make their own interpretation."

"History" for the new social studies people is construed as another social science. In a recent publication, New Frontiers in the Social Studies, John Gibson states clearly the theme which has captured the field: ". . . there should be no gap between what has been referred to as the social studies in the schools and the social sciences in higher education." With respect to history, Gibson explains: "If history is a process, use the historian's process in calling upon each new generation to reinterpret the past." <sup>3</sup> Reading between the lines, one finds the implication here to be, as in Bruner's case, that each student will somehow be capable of becoming his own historian (through learning the historian's "process").

In some respects every person must work out his own relationship with the world, past, present, and future, but this does not necessarily mean that each person can, or for that matter should, assume the task which Bruner and others suggest is appropriate. The Amherst type approach places the thorny

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<sup>1</sup> On Knowing, Essays for the Left Hand (Cambridge: 1962), 82, 120.

<sup>2</sup> See The Process of Education (New York: 1963).

<sup>3</sup> Medford, Mass.: 1965 , 20, 25.



issues of construing or structuring history in the laps of the students. As far as teaching the historian's "process" is concerned, this is a misleading enterprise, since a great deal of pre-structuring takes place in the prior selection of areas, issues, and facts which are (in "hot house" fashion) made available to the students. But more importantly, the whole approach smacks of a narrow, social science view of the nature of historical inquiry--there seems to be little concern with introducing students to the existential aspects of historical thought.

This latter criticism can be applied generally to most of the work being done in the curriculum. Martin Mayer's survey, Social Studies in American Schools, reflects the present picture. From what Mayer writes, or fails to write, it appears that he is doing even less thinking than most on the problem of Clio's role in the social studies curriculum.<sup>1</sup> He lashes out at the position that "history" can in any way have predictive power.<sup>2</sup> but he fails to support his argument in any convincing manner; and further, his position on "prediction" seems to contradict that taken by Bruner whom he seems to admire a great deal as a general spokesman for curriculum progress. Mayer says almost nothing about the social function of the historian as narrator, and in this respect what he has found in the social studies along with what he has looked for helps confirm the view that the existential aspect of historical inquiry is in a philosophico-historical vacuum.

Clio cannot be adequately cast in the scientific role of the disciplinarian, for in one important respect--perhaps her most important respect--she is involved in a non-disciplinary function. In producing syntheses which involve the historian's broad "dispositions toward the future," Clio's subjective personality looms large. The emphasis on process and structure is as important to the historian as it is to the social scientist, but it takes more than a stretch of the imagination to make history into the kind of social science that would justify the present orientation among most social studies educators. It is my impression that Bruner and others have failed to comprehend the important non-objective dimension which shapes historical reconstruction. As a consequence, advocates of the disciplinary approach have been willing to "give kids the facts" and let them become their own historians without giving careful consideration to what it means to think historically.

Those who advocate the use of history as a means to critical and analytical thinking often fail to deal adequately with the existential dimension of historical

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<sup>1</sup> There is no reason why his should not be a rather shallow survey, of course, for it appears to be more of an educational travelogue than anything else.

<sup>2</sup> Originally published as Where, When and Why: Social Studies in American Schools (NY: 1962).



thought and involvement. Much has been written about "history" as a means to "critical" or "rational" thinking, but little attention has been given to the potentiality contained in narrative as a shaping force in human behavior.

In the Thirty First Year Book for the National Council for the Social Studies, Cartwright and Watson are firm on this question of history as a means to critical thinking.

We are, of course, quite aware that we are not suggesting any original purpose for the 1961 Yearbook. Indeed, one of the strengths of the series through the years has been that "critical thinking" has appeared as a recurring theme. <sup>1</sup>

I am not sure what is meant by "critical thinking," but I am quite certain that they are correct in claiming no original purpose. I am also certain about their lack of concern with historical narrative.

By the same token, W. Burlie Brown, in his United States History: A Bridge to the World of Ideas, gives much attention to the problem of developing skills in the "cognitive domain," but is relatively hazy in taking a stand for historical narrative per se--he simply does not involve himself with the kind of question raised in this paper, in spite of the fact that he offers a rather meaningful historical "framework," through which students might be expected to develop a more vital sense of identification with the past.

The 1964 Yearbook, "New Perspectives in World History," is another example of the paucity of philosophico-historical involvement on the part of social studies educators with respect to the problem of historical narrative. For example, the most potentially relevant article in this respect, Engle's essay on "model building," fails to spell out the assumptions and implications underlying the model approach and also fails to generalize about the nature of curriculum ideas which might be developed therefrom. <sup>2</sup>

Each of these approaches reflects a concern for "critical thinking," and, to some extent, each implies the social utility of historical interpretation, though this latter concern is seldom treated in systematic depth; indeed, it is

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<sup>1</sup> William H. Cartwright and Richard L. Waton, Jr., "Interpreting and Teaching American History," <sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Shirley Engle, ed., 34th Yearbook for the National Council for Social Studies, 1964.

usually left in an intellectual limbo. Thus, in scanning the social studies field today, one finds Clio taking her place as one of the social sciences--occasionally to be used as a means for promoting critical or analytical thinking in non-disciplinary contexts (for example, Oliver and Shaver would use her in this way), but not accepted in her traditional role as a story-teller.

During the twentieth century, many historians have utilized social science findings in their work, and the results have been positive. Much of what is written today is in fact more historical than what was written in yesteryear. Yet, in certain respects, the use of social science concepts and methods has subtly and silently and perhaps unintentionally, undermined certain assumptions about human reason, power, and progress which were central to our grand style predecessors. One of the fundamental concerns for every generation of historians should be--as C. Vann Woodward has noted--to reinterpret the present in a manner which has relevance for their society. To some extent, the social sciences, reflecting as they do the fragmentation and compartmentalization of knowledge, have taken our attention away from a central challenge which related to this matter of reinterpretation: making possible for society a greater understanding of the unique sequences of events and circumstances that determine its place in space and time. This challenge, with its burden and glory for the choices that it demands, has been too often ignored by historians and educators in our day.

#### D. Istory vs. History--The Dangers of I-It Thinking

This latter remark calls for additional explanation. As a story-teller, what function does the historian have that the social scientist usually lacks? The answer, I think, is twofold: first he has the task of dealing with that which is unique, his fundamental concern is with irregularity rather than with regularity; second, he is concerned with the nature and relationship of events over long time spans. Present thinking about rational action and the role of the historian and educator in relation to that action must recognize that man's capacity to act rationally is directly related to his perceptual organization of spatial and temporal phenomena, and that this process requires continual reorientation involving symbolic interpretation of phenomena in unique causal relationships. A clearer way to make this point might be to imagine for a moment that we are watching Huntley-Brinkley, or some other thirty minute news broadcast. Our problem is how to make sense out of the news? Is there any way to place Vietnam, the Stock Market, Cape Kennedy, Urban Upheaval, and even television itself with its advertisements into some pattern or frame which will provide a basis for individual choice and action in relation to those phenomena? The disciplinary approach provides some guidance, for one can examine many problems and issues with the insights and categories supplied by psychology or sociology. Approaches involving "critical thinking" are also of some value to some individuals, depending on what might be meant by the term itself. But the problem of conceptual unity and meaningful socio-historical self-definition still go unsolved. The reason perhaps, is related to the fact that such approaches have yet to demonstrate their capacities to bring

order to a world of concrete and unique events and circumstances. To do this, the organizing principles must entail historical movement and change. People growing up all over this planet are clinging to, or struggling to find answers to questions of personal and collective identity; certainly there are millions who have not developed an urgency like the one implied in this discussion, but only the blind would venture to say that present historical trends are not in this direction.

Formulas for critical thinking, or scientific analysis, as they are now being put forth, are, by themselves, no more sufficient for Americans than they are for the "masses" of South and Central America, or Russia, or Southeast Asia. Scientific "tools" and processes, be they for the analysis of an economic cycle or for the analysis of racial hatred are not sufficient for the task we face. Ours is a task of dramatic historical import, and history must be grasped in this spirit. If Marxism has taken a great leap forward vis à vis the Western democracies, a good part of the reason is in the fact that the Marxist has consciously or unconsciously recognized that men live in a unique and dramatic historical process. No historical construction in recent history, save perhaps the general goals of the Enlightenment as written into the literature surrounding the American and French Revolutions, has been more powerful in promoting historical consciousness, and consequently in promoting a rational grasp of and control over the events and circumstances of history.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult for many of us to accept this fact, if not for ideological reasons, certainly because from a philosophical vantage point, it seems paradoxical that a philosophy of economic determinism should be responsible for promoting rational control. But all is not neatly arranged to suit what we might want to believe about the nature of the human creature, and, as in the case of Calvinism, Marxism has promoted certain kinds of rational behavior because of, not in spite of, its creed. It provides its believers with an acute awareness of their historical place, their place in relation to a unique unfolding of events and circumstances, and in-so-doing it promotes behavior that is undeniably powerful in the existential, prophetic sense.

How ironical, that in our day the philosophy which holds that man does make a difference in the scales of history, the liberal democratic creed, seemingly is taking second place to a philosophy which preaches the insignificance of the individual (not the insignificance of the individual in the final victory of history, but the insignificance of the individual in the historical unfolding that supposedly will result in that victory).

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<sup>1</sup> This is not to say that I believe that Marxism offers a more valid interpretation of the past than, say, most historians in our society, but it is to say that the interpretation offered by Marxism is a powerful one, and does have predictive power.



How does one explain this? Part of the answer, I think, is that an historical sense of awareness, an awareness of the unique drama of human existence through time, is the sine qua non of rational involvement in the history of our day. Thus, more than any explicit statement about the rational control of man over nature, more than our capacity to mouth pretty phrases about our control over the future, what is fundamental seems to be a more basic experiencing of one's presence in historical drama.

I have raised this issue in part to suggest what must be considered a serious question about the validity of the entire existential approach. How can one claim that mental constructions influence the course of history when one can plainly see that constructions of a Marxist nature seem to have as much, if not more, power in changing men and history than those of liberal democracy? I will not try to wiggle away from the seriousness of this question, but I do want to make two points which support the general argument of this report: (1) that the power of Marxist historical construction is in fact proof of the point I have been making about the relation between historical consciousness and rational control, and further it is proof that the way one interprets oneself is important in how one behaves; and (2) that it is the failure of liberal-democracy to keep pace with Marxism in this respect that is one of the most important reasons for democracy's present frustration in attempting to shape the course of history through shaping man's consciousness.

How does one account for the fact that Bancroft's children have seemingly lost faith in the unfolding of time? We have touched on many of the ingredients that go into an answer, but the most basic cannot be stated too often: there has been a falling out of love with history. To some extent this can be viewed in terms of the tendency we all have to seek security in the mythological mode of consciousness that is so often ready to seduce us--it is easy to assume that there are truths that do not live in human bodies and historical circumstances. (It is this kind of thinking for which we have condemned Bancroft, and yet today, perhaps more by omission than commission, we are often guilty ourselves.)

I have spoken of the existential power of Marxism, but I do not want to leave the reader with the wrong impression. What is frightening to me about Marxism is precisely the fact that so often the Marxists do act in a manner which reflects their interpretation of change, a manner characterized by violence and a lack of respect for each individual's life; on the other side of this coin, what is most appealing about the liberal democrat is that he often acts out his belief for peaceful progress and individual dignity. With respect to this latter point, it is not easy today to marshal evidence. I guess one would be on safe ground by pointing to what the American people might have done--especially in the immediate post-World War Two period when it would have been possible to use nuclear power to destroy that large segment of the world that was communist--, rather than to what we have done. With respect to the present scene, I am tempted to say that there is not much evidence to support my view that liberal



democracy is fulfilling its humane promise (I am thinking especially about foreign affairs, although the domestic scene cannot be isolated in this respect). This, of course, is a sad commentary on what is happening today (or perhaps of my view of what is happening), but I cannot claim more than what the evidence suggests.

Historical narrative is a means for extending control over one's environment; it is a dimension of experience through which man has been able to transcend mythopoetic, pre-rational thought; it is a dimension which is critical for man today in his quest to locate himself in space and time. Man functions in society by sharing symbolic constructions with his fellow man. The words on this paper attest to this phenomenon. You read what I write, and we communicate to the extent that we share this symbolic reality. Furthermore, our sharing is a form of "investment" that points outward toward the world as well as inward toward the self. At times in human history certain symbolic constructions and systems have more power and influence in the affairs of men than at other times; and at times men seem to develop more systematic and integrated symbolic pictures of the world than at other times. Medieval men, for example, shared a construction of the world which gave unity and wholeness to all phenomena--Christianity provided a world view which made self-definition a relatively simple matter. The identity problems of medieval men were much different from those which we have today.

When the parts and pieces of reality seem to fit together nicely, we might say that men experience themselves and their world as a "whole" (as in Christianity in its medieval context, or as in Marxism today, and to some extent in liberal democracy). Many men in our time find themselves in a world that seems fragmented and disintegrated, lacking in conceptual unity. Old symbolic constructions are being challenged and disrupted, symbolic forms no longer seem to "fit," and men experience a loss of "wholeness" both in their personal lives and also in their understanding of the world. Investment in the world is inseparable from investment in self, and disruption in one is disruption in the other. One way, of course, to deal with fragmentation and disunity is to accept it as the nature of the world, to say that disunity makes sense as disunity, and thus to find a sense of personal wholeness by construing the whole as fragmented. This approach, however, would seem antithetical to our basic assumptions about our capacity to shape the course of history.

This loss in a sense of wholeness should not be interpreted as an evil phenomenon, for much that is built in man's future is dependent upon his ability to reject, and sometimes destroy, that which has given wholeness to his past. Thus, knowing fragmentation, grasping it in our time, can be the first step in exerting some rational influence over it. Many people today are confused and concerned about the relation between past and future, and therefore about their own values and goals; which, as I have so often stated in this paper, have been determined in a context characterized by historical modes of thinking. This is

the kind of confusion which exists when one finds oneself in an unexpected environment, when expectations have been drowned in a swirl of uncertainty and change. As educators we should ask ourselves what democratic behavior means in relation to time-space conceptualizations that provide the very foundation for rational thought and action. To do this, we must analyse the situation historically, and this is what I have attempted to do, at least in an outline sketch. Within the unfolding of Western history, reason has developed hand in hand with an historical consciousness involving self-definition in relatively expanded conceptions of time and space. Because our society rests on such expanded time-space conceptualizations--for example, consider the banking and investment systems--a failure to conceive of oneself in said kinds of relationships to events and circumstances could perhaps result in a weakening of rational control over the environment. The development of modern Western society required time-space consciousness to an extent hardly evident in other historical periods and places; capitalism and the clock were inseparable bedfellows, and scientific and technological advances proceeded hand in hand with an ability to make ever broader and ever finer distinctions between phenomena in temporal and spatial relations. The computer has moved in to speed up the clock, and has perhaps disrupted the balance, but this is no mandate for forgetting the nature of our system as one involving a particular kind of temporal and spatial investment.

There are powerful forces at work in our society which diminish the importance of this kind of investment; most evident is that associated with modern advertising and its message to "buy now and pay later." This may or may not be a step forward, depending on what criteria one uses in the judgment--from an economic vantage point it is probably good that the Puritan Ethic has been weakened. The purpose here is not to discredit credit purchasing, nor is it to attack the larger issue of deficit spending which is in some ways the granddaddy of the credit card; the purpose is simply to suggest that there are forces at work which are telling men, in effect, "do not worry about tomorrow."<sup>1</sup> Thus, along

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<sup>1</sup> In this respect it is interesting that the present economic pressures for deficit spending have not been accompanied with an extended temporal awareness. Thus, even though deficit spending entails long term deficit investment, it has not contributed to any extended temporal awareness. In the past, on the other hand, certain kinds of deficit investment, in savings and stocks for example, have been accompanied by an extended temporal awareness. I am not prepared to do more than speculate on this phenomenon. The historical and psychological reasons for it are certainly beyond the scope of this study. My purpose here is simply to suggest that there is a relationship between economic investment and personal, historical investment, and that one cannot separate what is now happening in our economic lives from what is happening with respect to our more general political and social goals. Perhaps one reason, then, for historical dis-investment is related to the nature of economic change; on the other hand, historical failures and frustrations have no doubt stimulated and/or reinforced certain kinds of economic behavior.

with the negative experiences which many people have had with Clio herself, the socio-economic atmosphere of recent decades has been no small factor in contributing to an orientation in time of "simple location." The subtle yet constant pressures of the socio-economic system have contributed to the process herein described as falling out of love with history.

Social studies educators are consciously or unconsciously aware of the kinds of problems that have been raised in this paper. Their concern with "structure" and "process" is an affirmation of this fact--modern man is experiencing fragmentation in his definition of reality, including himself as part thereof, and for this reason he is obsessed with issues like those we associate with "structure" and "process." "Structurelessness" and "processlessness" are the other side of this intellectual coin. Some critics argue that there is nothing new in this situation; that man has always experienced structurelessness and fragmentation as part of his being--hence man's eternal concern with "the fall" in one form or another, and likewise his search for atonement (at-one-ment). This position has some validity, but only to a point. What is unique about our situation is that rational action arose historically in a process that entailed a particular kind of historical consciousness. Our scientific roots extend back to the natural law of the Greeks, but also to the moral law of the Hebrews. From the former Western man acquired much of his capacity to abstract in the best, scientific sense: but from the latter he gained his sense of existing in unique and changing temporal sequences, and we must not forget the importance of Hebraic historical consciousness as one leg upon which the Enlightenment rested. In many respects, science has denied that which has given it power and life: the historical consciousness that broadened man's grasp of events and circumstances through time and across space.

In recent years, the falling out of love phenomenon has led some to believe that scientific thinking can be divorced from the historical dimension of existence. Within the social studies area, the phenomenon has blinded intelligent men to the function which historical consciousness has in contributing to rational thought and action. I am speaking about a general picture, a climate of thinking, a matter of emphasis and attitude, and there are certainly some important exceptions to be recognized. For example, more than any other social science, anthropology recognizes the importance of man's historical setting. I think, however, that as a general rule social studies education has failed to stimulate historical thinking, and one reason for this failure is that educators have not recognized the importance of the historical mode of thinking; what this boils down to is that many educators do not themselves think historically.

To think and act rationally one must construe oneself in relation to that which is not, in relation to a future that is non-existent, but which must be derived from that which has been. A noted psychologist has noted that ". . . the possession of long-range goals, regarded as central to one's personal existence, distinguishes the human being from the animal, the adult from the child, and in



many cases the healthy personality from the sick." This statement is misleading to the extent that it might convey the idea that human personality has always been and always will be saturated with "long-range goals." It is an assumption of this paper that man might not have such goals, and yet might be quite healthy, providing his socio-historical context (not "historical" in terms of his grasp of reality) is such that an orientation of simple location is not destructive to his being. This would be the case in societies which are tied to the cycle of the seasons. On the other hand, in a society like ours, where goals have been and still are inseparable from institutions that demand extended temporal consciousness, any disengagement with extended historical consciousness could be dangerous. From Sartre's vantage point, such goals require that man project himself; from Ortega's, they require that man "autofabricate" himself. The orientation demands faith, and the projecting demands risk, for rational action always will imply "roads not taken," and roads not taken will imply a sense of the unknown.

One dimension of the problem which we have not considered is the extent to which the present falling out of love is actually the first step in a new love affair with history, one that will involve new investments in a new world. It may well be that the historian of the future will look back and view our age as one of transition from nationalism to transnationalism; that is, an age which gave birth to the ancient dream of one world and one body. This likelihood, of course, depends upon the way we define ourselves now! It may well be, as the communists point out, that there are "iron laws" controlling history, and that man's actions are of no consequence; or perhaps it might be that when compared with the giant forces at work one little voice is no more than a piddle in the ocean when it comes to changing the tide of history. On the other hand, if we accept either of these kinds of determinism, we might resign ourselves to some kind of withdrawal from action, and in the act of withdrawal we might in fact help make "iron laws" come true. The events of recent years make me think that people, especially the young, are striving to invest themselves anew. It is this striving that made John F. Kennedy's death such a tragedy. Kennedy grasped the fact of his own historical meaning in this respect; he refused to believe that he made no difference.

In this paper there is a concern for the utility of history; but it is dangerous to conceive of the existential approach strictly in terms of using history, for although it does entail this, it goes beyond it. To speak about that which is completely new, especially in glancing toward the unknown, one must offer an investment in self and world that combines the abstract with the real. To move beyond any point, one confirms that which one moves beyond, and in this sense, the power of the creator, the agent, entails a willingness to leap from the concrete into the abstract, a willingness to risk entering nothingness through faith.

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1 Allport, Becoming, 51.



This conception of the historical agent alludes not simply to a man who uses information about the past, not simply to the past as a guide to the future, but rather to an orientation toward space and time, in space and time, which provides man with the courage to act in spite of his awareness that the substance of creation is nothingness, the empty future.

Rational thought and action have rested to a large extent on man's ability to "stand apart," and "look at" himself and his world, but there is a danger in construing rationality strictly in terms of objectivity. The virtues of objective analysis are also potential vices. Eliot's Prufrock personified this problem when he noted that "in a minute there is time for decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse." Nowhere is this danger more obvious than in the teaching of history today. We tend to emphasize the idea of an "I" acting on an "it," the idea of a creature who "studies history." For the most part we present historical facts as "its," and students are told to use the "its" in one of many different ways. What can happen, and what is happening, I believe, is that the student develops an orientation toward history as an observer, rather than a participant. The present approach to the subject, reflected in phrases like "I study history," or "the study of history," gives the impression that the individual is spectator rather than agent. What is needed, along with a good deal of fresh thinking on the entire subject, is a change in terminology--history should be called Istory or Mystory; and these changes in terminology should be instituted for the student at a very early age.

This last statement is not made with tongue in cheek, for to the extent that we recognize an almost animistic orientation in the behavior of the young human being, and to the extent that we recognize our own freedom and responsibility to shape that orientation, we must rationally choose those symbols to which we expose the child in our socializing task. I can remember quite clearly my sixth grade history class, which was taught by a wonderful old New Hampshire gentleman whose history stories quite clearly reflected every personal opinion which he held. We used to make a big deal about calling our history class "his-story" class, somehow sensing the extreme subjectivity of his views. My purpose in relating this story is by no means to try to prove that all children grasp history as his-story, or even that as a sixth grader my view reflected the kind of subject-object orientation referred to in the above. I would like to suggest, however, that my first attempts to abstract about the nature of history were greatly influenced by the nature of the symbol itself, and that under different circumstances, with different teachers, and with different symbols used to designate man's past experiences, my own development with respect to learning how to think historically would have been quite different.

Perhaps it would be easier to illustrate this point about the power of symbols by looking at another kind of example. In our society the Negro is constantly reminded of his "inferiority" in a number of ways directly related to the use of words like "black" and "white" to describe various phenomena that are

supposedly, and respectively, "evil" and "good." Thus the small Negro child learns that the wolf is usually black, and that good sheep are white: he learns all too soon that bad men are convicted for blackmail and that the President lives in the White House; he learns that brides wear white dresses and that dead men are surrounded by blackness; and he might even learn that God helped create his world by bringing light (white) to the dark (black) planet. This matter--the good/evil association with white/black--is by no means simply explained. But whatever an explanation might entail, we know that all children and most adults are subject to irrational and unconscious associations that are directly related to the use and abuse of symbols.

The social studies educator must grasp this matter in his attempt to promote rational, historical thinking. The way we present the past to little ones has much to do with their later capacity to grasp themselves as agents in the unfolding of time.

If we can understand that history is not something out there, but something in which we define ourselves, something which makes us, and in turn which we make; if we can accept and understand this, then we must be distraught by the treatment which Clio is getting in the social studies field today. The issue, I believe, is a spiritual one to the extent that it involves an orientation of man toward the substance of his being, toward what Tillich has termed the "ground of being." Western man must be willing to project (invest himself) in the face of potential non-being, both in the personal and also in the social sense of that term. This is an historical issue, and one that can only be understood through grasping it historically. Falling out of love with history can be construed as a blessing for our age, but only if we are willing to transcend what it makes us, only if we are willing to overcome its potential evils through confirming them. Prophetic narrative is, among other things, a cultural couch for collective psychoanalysis: "the new in history always comes. . . only in the moment when the old becomes visible as old and tragic and dying. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Educators in the social studies area would benefit from taking another look at the present revolution and asking themselves some historical questions about its nature. The historian, through narrative, is one thinker continually concerned with long temporal sequences. His function should be the subject of critical examination, especially at a time when values and ideals are in a state of great change.

Falling out of love has its advantages along with its disadvantages. As old loves fade opportunities arise to create anew. If, for example, the kind of investment which many Americans (and Westerners) made in nationalism in the past is

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Tillich, Shaking of the Foundations, (NY: 1948), 183.

no longer such a binding force, new investment opportunities are perhaps staring us in the face. What is frightening is that many of those people in our society who are fully aware, at least intellectually, of such opportunities are apparently unwilling or unable to make the investment, to take the risk, that is necessary for constructive historical involvement. Present attitudes and orientations toward history among social studies educators and historians might indeed be contributing factors to this phenomenon.

When one asks "what is the future of man?" one is confirming the rational-scientific orientation with respect to the nature and meaning of history; that is, one is entering history with a question that might help bring control and order to the process itself. By the same token, however, one might well imply (with that question) that man is apart from the process, a witness to it, an observer, for "what" implies something already established, something to be discovered, rather than something to be invented or created. It is at this point that one must take care, for although the "scientific," objective orientation toward the world has indeed been man's greatest asset in learning how to act on his world and change it in directions which reflect rational choice, we know that thought, as one determinant, cannot be removed from the process of change. On this point, the existential notion is important, for in its emphasis of the self-fulfilling phenomenon it stresses the importance of thought and action as part of, rather than a-part from, historical change.

In the next section of this paper we will consider one way of approaching the study of history which reflects a concern for man as an agent in history.

### Part III--Curriculum

#### Introduction:

It is now time to discuss the rationale and the criticism in relation to curriculum development, and more specifically in relation to a piece of curriculum on which I have been working for the past several years, a senior level course, entitled "Identity and Democracy." Along with a brief description and discussion of this course, I will examine some issues and problems that are closely related to the course. In this latter respect, I want to give special attention to some of the ways in which the Identity and Democracy framework might be utilized by those working with minority groups in American society, like the Negroes and the Indians; and I also want to discuss the problem of how one justifies teaching any historical construction within the context of a democratic society.

One of the general difficulties which will become apparent in this section of the paper is related to the fact that the rationale and the criticism are directed at a very general educational issue, the nature and utility of historical narrative, or more broadly, historical consciousness. Thus, in attempting to zero in on a particular piece of curriculum, we will sacrifice some of the general perspective which was crucial to the first two parts of the report. There are advantages as well as disadvantages in this task. In any event, the reader should keep in mind the fact that the Identity and Democracy curriculum is but one of many possible ways--many of them outside of the formal, educational system--in which one might attempt to promote historical consciousness.

Another general difficulty that arises in this section of the paper is related to the fact that I have taught the piece of curriculum in various ways, and under differing circumstances. Therefore, in discussing the curriculum I will to some extent be discussing several courses. Most of the course description and materials which appear here and in the appendix are designed for college-prep senior high school students. Some of the ideas and materials have been used in a single unit at Brookline High School, in Brookline, Massachusetts; and some of the curriculum has been taught in the Harvard Graduate School of Education's teacher training program (the Harvard-Newton Summer Program); at present, I am team-teaching the identity course with Mr. John Huie at St. Mark's School of Texas. Our students are highly motivated and intelligent, therefore much of the discussion in this section of the paper will reflect a concern for the "advanced" student.

#### A. The Little Ones

One's sense of social and historical reality is influenced greatly by what one hears, sees, and otherwise senses in one's early years. It would be naive for us to assume that we, the secondary school teachers, could somehow provide the program, not to mention the course, for shaping a child's development in terms of his knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward the world. In our attempts to



change the child's view of self and society, we must recognize that ours is a role akin to that of a tugboat pulling an iceberg. The schools are not the only, or even the most important influence which society uses in shaping the individual's growth and development--the family, the t.v., the peer group, etc., are all significant, and perhaps more powerful, in this respect. Also, more than words and phrases, non-rational and irrational exchanges involving the child's sense of personal worth and potentiality are crucial to his development. The way the mother holds the child--even before giving birth--helps establish an orientation toward reality which cannot be taken lightly by the social technician. We know too that even the slightest deficiencies in diet are crucial to a person's intellectual and physical development. Thus, non-rational phenomena, so important to later behavior, are especially important shaping forces in the early months and years of life. Furthermore, within the educational setting itself, the lower grades probably exert a much greater influence on the child's overall development than do the middle and upper grades, at least in providing the foundation for later social interaction.

One of the most pressing problems in curriculum development, and one that receives surprisingly little attention (at least in the social studies area), is that which involves the "mythological base" which is "taught" in the lower grades. Stories, fictional and otherwise, enter into a person's frame of reference, one's mind set, shaping an orientation toward the world. Like other stories, historical narrative is important in this respect, but it is difficult to know to what extent the child, or at what point the child, is able to think historically.

At an earlier point in this report we examined mythological and historical orientations. The distinction which was made at that point was in fact too distinct, and like most distinctions, it served one purpose, but ill-served another, the one we are now exploring. We are all, of course, engaged much of the time in thought processes that can be termed mythological as we have defined that term; by the same token, most of us think historically a good deal of the time. Historical thinking did not develop apart from mythological thinking, nor did it completely replace that mode, rather, it developed through symbolically stretching myths over great spans of time, and then gradually becoming more concerned with the time change than with the unchanging myth. To some extent I would agree with Freud's notion that the child relives the history of the race. Without taking too seriously many of Freud's ideas on this subject, one can see how children advance through stages that are closely related to what we have discussed as the animistic and mythological modes. It seems to me that one objective of education in our time is to help individuals stretch their minds in substituting historical for mythological explanation.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Piaget has written much on this phenomenon in childhood development. At this point in my research, however, I am not prepared to deal with his work as it bears on the concern for developing historical thinking.

And yet in certain respects it would be foolish to advocate the end of mythology, even if it were possible to achieve such an end. There are myths which have emerged historically which seem to enhance the development of historical consciousness. One such myth, for example, is that which is suggested by the term "free individual." Another such myth is that related to Progress, and man's power to control his world. Such views, I believe, often reflect a deep personal investment in what is understood to be essential truths, and to some degree these truths require neither past nor future in the sense that we have mentioned those terms in relation to historical consciousness. When a senior high school student, taking an American government course, is asked to define "individual rights," or is asked to explore the relations between the American nation and other nations of our world, that student draws upon a reservoir of ideas, concepts, and attitudes which can be partially explained by his mythological foundation. When the student hears the term "American" or "nation," or "individual," he already has an orientation toward the term, and although his frame of reference might be fuzzy, full of contradictions, and for the most part unconscious, nevertheless, he has acquired an orientation which sets the limits in which he can be expected to operate. He probably assumes, for example, that "nation" is a desirable (and perhaps the only) form of political sovereignty; he has, no doubt, been indoctrinated with the concept of nation as the sine qua non of socio-political organization. To say that this is part of a mythological foundation is not to imply that there is something wrong with it, or that the nation is not a very real and important source of socio-political organization, or that indoctrination has been systematic and evil; it is simply to assert that the individual's orientation toward "nation," and toward himself as an investor in "nation," is fundamentally irrational and often unconscious--mythological orientation permeates, and is often the "cement" for human society. Some scholars think that rational social analysis is itself dangerous to society precisely because it challenges the irrational, mythological foundation.

What is true of "nation" and "individual" is also true of "history." What a child is taught and otherwise learns about himself in relation to the events and circumstances in history influences the way he will act toward and in history. One of the great metahistorians has correctly indicated that "...it makes a great difference whether anyone lives under the constant impression that his life is an element in a far wider life-course...or conceives of himself as something rounded off and self-contained."<sup>1</sup> What needs to be added to this observation is that there is a fundamental difference between whether one conceives of oneself in an historical or in a mythological mode. The mythological mode is never far removed from our mental lives, and we must attempt to understand its place. To see it as a foundation for, or an element within, the historical mode is perhaps the best way of looking at it. Thus, while we might advocate substituting historical consciousness for mythological consciousness, it appears that there will always be an element of mythological consciousness.

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<sup>1</sup> Oswald Spengler, The Decline of the West (NY: 1962, abridged ed.), 7.

(It is possible, of course, that this statement is itself related to my own reluctance to "let go" of the mythological, and thereby an obstacle to a more complete historical orientation.)

We have begun this discussion of curriculum by stressing two considerations. Let us review these, and then move on: (1) The way a person defines himself in the world is greatly determined by his early experiences, and curriculum innovation designed strictly for the secondary school should recognize limitations based on this fact--furthermore, the school is only one of many forces working on the child in this respect; and (2) the emphasis on historical thinking should reflect a concern for the mythological, to the extent that it might be an essential ingredient in historical consciousness, and is certainly an important shaping factor in its development.<sup>1</sup>

#### B. Identity and Democracy

Let us now look briefly at a course that has been designed in an attempt to provide students with a constructive sense of historical self-definition. (I will attempt to explain what is meant by "a constructive sense of historical self-definition" as we progress through this essay.) It should be kept in mind that in suggesting some possibilities for a new senior level social studies course, I am making a very small step in the direction of a more general objective as spelled out in this rationale, which is to help individuals develop an historical and democratic view of reality.

In attempting to promote historical thinking in the social studies area, there are three general considerations that I want to mention. First is the matter of sequential historical construction per se: the cause-effect arrangement of data that makes possible rational understanding in the context of Western society. (We have already spoken briefly about this consideration.) The second consideration is the relationship between the individual and the narrative; that is, his orientation toward (and within) the sequential construction. We have touched on this at several points, but will now discuss it in a little more detail in relation to curriculum matters. And the third consideration is the issue of how one justifies teaching students to think historically; that is, how one can square this kind of manipulation with the basic tenets of a democratic faith.

With respect to the first two considerations, it is quite possible that

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<sup>1</sup> It is important that the reader keep in mind the way in which we have defined the terms in this report. For example, Northrop Frye uses the term myth in a slightly different way from that employed here. His reference, I believe, is to that aspect of reality which exists primarily in the imagination, and he correctly claims that mythological conceptions are absolutely essential to all civilization. See The Educated Imagination (Bloomington, Ill.: 1964).



students might be exposed to an historical construction which provides them with an opportunity to make rational decisions, but at the same time students might not care about making such decisions. For example, a number of case studies involving important problems and issues in American life have been developed in recent years, and these studies are designed to provide students with a sequential, historical ordering of events and circumstances. One can find cases about labor, race relations, big business, etc., all of which offer an ordering of historical events and circumstances that have helped determine the present nature of the particular issue under consideration. These cases provide some basis for helping students to think and act rationally (historically), but they often do not stimulate such behavior. It is this latter concern which is central to the identity curriculum.

Rational thought and behavior require a sense of personal investment in history. Many people in our society today do not have the kind of historical orientation which would permit them to act rationally; many others have been exposed to historical construction that helps them view events and circumstances historically, but they often seem to avoid an interpretation of self as agent with respect to such events and circumstances. To the extent that this is a valid assessment of present behavior, there is an obvious irony here: some men feel helpless at the historical moment when they seemingly have the greatest potential control over their world.

I am not speaking here of those segments of American society which, for obvious reasons, have been deprived of the opportunities to think rationally and historically (perhaps deprived in the first years of life). One could visit many inner city ghettos and conclude that the raw information needed to relate oneself rationally to happenings in space and time is missing. I am referring here to privileged Americans, those who have had every opportunity to think of themselves as rational historical agents, and to act accordingly; those going to schools in Newton, Massachusetts, in Winnetka, Illinois, and in other areas where there is a premium on good education. I am referring to the ones who populate the most prestigious colleges and universities of our land; I am speaking here of the kind about whom Kenneth Keniston writes in his study of the "uncommitted." <sup>1</sup>

Many of the best case study approaches are on target to the extent that they recognize the function of causal, historical sequences as necessary in the rational decision-making process; in this respect, they rest on a valid assumption, usually unstated, about the interrelatedness of historical thought and rational thinking in our society. What these approaches often fail to do, however, is provide a narrative in which the individual can perceive himself as agent; that is, a context in which the "I" is understood as having a dynamic relatedness in the historical construction under consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> The Uncommitted: Alienated Youth in American Society (New York: 1960) .



I have attempted to deal with this problem by starting with one central "case study," that of the individual taking the course. Utilizing identity concepts, the objective is to stimulate what I consider to be an all too often latent sense of existential involvement in the nature and direction of historical change. I use the term "latent" because it seems to me that in the earliest years of life most children in a democratic society do develop an existential orientation toward themselves and their world--in a million ways children are encouraged to take control of themselves and their environment. (This might even be a universal consideration in looking at human behavior, but whatever its nature, it appears to be a reality in the training of children in our society.) At the same time, however, our society discourages, also in a million ways, children from considering themselves as existentially involved in the nature and direction of history. Our socializing institutions, including the family, the school, the church, and even the television (if we can call it an institution), are responsible for discouraging historical thought processes. The school, as already pointed out, very often approaches the "study of history" in a manner that makes it difficult to think of oneself as an historical agent.<sup>1</sup>

The identity and democracy curriculum is designed to provide a framework, a content structure, that will help individuals define themselves as agents in the process of change, as agents in relation to themselves as part of that process of change. This kind of structuring is pursued by using the concept of identity, for this concept speaks directly to the psycho-social context of the adolescent (often a context of identity diffusion). It is also instructive in understanding the collective behavior of peoples living in a world of violent and rapid change, a world of collective identity diffusion.

The general concern is to help students more fully grasp themselves as part of the unique unfolding we think of as history. This necessitates their moving beyond mythological constructions about man and his past and his future; it necessitates their rejecting much that is deep within them (and within their society), but, at the same time, it necessitates their affirming much that is deep within them. (Erik Erikson's appeal, with respect to these general concerns, should be self-evident: he is one social scientist, by no means the only one, who is able to clearly view personality development in relation to the historical mode.) Using identity as a criterion for selecting and arranging historical data, the task is to symbolically construct a world that has a past and a future. Also, the task involves having the students view themselves as inextricably involved in the process of change. It is assumed that if successfully conveyed, an open-ended historical construction will help combat tendencies to construe the present as a phenomenon of simple location--and on the positive side of this coin, it would promote rational thought and action.

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<sup>1</sup> See pages 62-71.

The following outline sketch suggests one of the ways that the content has been structured to achieve the suggested objectives. It will be followed by a discussion of another content structure which is designed for "less advanced" students. Few references will be made to source materials in this outline--an outline of selected sources appears in the appendix. There are many approaches, aside from those we are about to examine, which might be equally, or more, effective. A friend has suggested that utilizing Eastern religious and historical data would be an effective means for exploring the Western sense of identity. This would certainly add a dimension which is missing here; however, to date I have been working with the following content framework:

- I. A presentation and examination of the course rationale. Students will get an exposure to the existential psychological assumption upon which the course is constructed.
- II. An examination of the central psychological concept, identity, and related concepts, including negative identity, identity crisis, identity diffusion, and a general understanding of Erikson's "stages of development." In gaining understanding, students will not only examine the theory but also use it in examining several case studies and problems (one can get some indication about this by looking at the discussion of materials which appears in the appendix).
- III. A post-hoc examination of Western history, organized around the concept of an Enlightened (liberal democratic) world view: first stressing some of the determining factors in its historical development, and then emphasizing certain ideas, events, and circumstances which have challenged and threatened that world view (and those holding it) in our time. The historical framework also contains a model for looking at some of the ways men respond when their identity is challenged, and this is directly related to the challenges which confront those who define themselves in liberal democratic terms:
  - (A) Identity (or lack of it) in primitive and ancient societies; animism as a mode of self-definition. Students understand that all men do not define themselves as "individuals" the way that most of them do.
  - (B) The religious sense of identity of the Hebrews--stressing differences between the animistic and religious modes of self-definition.
  - (C) Greek Philosophy--those aspects which help establish a basis for a natural-law, scientific mode of thinking.
  - (D) St. Augustine and the Medieval, Christian worldview. The

concern here is to help students see the way in which both the Greek and also the Hebrew influences helped shape Western thought ( and thus Western identity), especially through the thinking of Augustine.

- (E) The Transition to Modernism--"individuation" (as Fromm uses that term) and secularization. A look at certain aspects of the Renaissance, Reformation, and then the Enlightenment, emphasizing the rise of the middle class and its influence on the development of that kind of world view we refer to as Enlightened. An Enlightened identity model is developed, and certain elements of this model are stressed: reason, individualism, progress, and natural-lawfulness are among the central characteristics of the Enlightened sense of identity (nationalism is soon added to this core, but with important qualifications). In this section of the unit, emphasis is also given to man's expanding organization of space and time, and the relationship here between his ideas and his control of the environment. (Reason, and the scientific thought of this era are viewed both in terms of the Greek and also in terms of the Augustinian influences on Western thought--the point being that rational thinking is related to a particular kind of historical self-awareness.)
- (F) Challenges to the Enlightened faith in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries:
  - (1) Men and ideas, including Marx, Darwin, Freud, and Einstein.
  - (2) Events and circumstances, including urban-industrialism, war, revolution, depression, political extremism, technological innovation (especially in communication, transportation, and weaponry), poverty, etc.
- (G) Responses to these challenges, emphasizing the way in which self-definition becomes a major problem and challenge in its own right:
  - (1) Psychological and social upheaval, including forms of withdrawal and escape (joining extremist groups, becoming one of the "uncommitted," engaging in various forms of "intoxication," etc.)

- (2) Reinterpretation--attempts at finding ways of interpreting the basic tenets of the Enlightened faith in the present context. Emphasis here is on what individuals are thinking about themselves, and their world; implications with respect to political, religious, social, etc., phenomena are many--perhaps a look at Kennedy's "New Frontier," at Paul Goodman's views on education, at some of the Existentialists, and at Beatlistic behavior. One could lengthen this list by including new thinking in theology, economics, psychology, biology, etc. The course, Identity and Democracy, is also subject to examination from this vantage point. All of this is tied to the attempts of men to salvage some or all of the basic articles in the Enlightened world-view, or to reinterpret the world in relation to the central article, the dignified individual. Emphasis is given to man's present position in relation to what he projects for the future.

- IV. A re-examination of the rationale and curriculum with reference to some of the obvious problems and weaknesses in the historical framework. (We will return to this aspect of the course a little later, when considering the problem of justification.)

Thinking back to the existential proposition (that man is and becomes in relation to how he defines himself. . .), one can see how the curriculum is designed to change behavior through changing self-definition. The hope is that such an approach promotes more rational action through helping individuals define themselves in both psychological and historical terms as agents. Special care is taken to combat any tendency to construe psychology and history as distinct spheres of reality, for it is the meshing of worlds that will hopefully convey what is termed here a "constructive sense of historical self-definition." Neither disciplinary structure nor critical thinking, as usually construed, provides the kind of conceptual framework which can accomplish this goal; Clio offers promise, for, as stated time and again in this paper, if men are to move into the future with direction and hope, they must develop a conscious concern for goals and programs which take shape in relation to the unique unfolding of time, and what is more, they must see themselves as having an investment in that unfolding.

#### C. Wasps, Negroes and Indians

One of the major criticisms that has been directed at this piece of curriculum in that it reflects an obvious middle class bias on two closely related counts: (1) it centers on liberal democratic ideas and ideals; and (2) it appears to "speak"



mainly to white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants (Wasps). I question the validity of this criticism, but I do not question the fact that the curriculum is saturated with many liberal democratic ideas and ideals. There are several good reasons why this is so. First, in looking at the rise of a great middle class society, one is bound to emphasize the importance of middle class values and ideals. Furthermore, it is assumed that there is much value in much, if not most, of our middle class heritage. The writing of this paper is itself an act which is motivated by expectations that the reader will share in a process that reflects some of the basic tenets of that heritage. The fact that on the one hand one is free to express ideas about what should be taught in the schools and on the other hand, others are free to criticize those ideas, and the fact that we might all assume that something good will develop from such dialogue, is the best, immediate evidence of the extent to which we accept certain basic assumptions of a liberal democratic nature. Thus it is true that the curriculum is designed to promote a particular historical and philosophical orientation, and it is hoped that no apologies are necessary. On some matters the curriculum extends beyond the limits of traditional, liberal democratic assumptions. For example, it explicitly raises questions about the nation as the ultimate vehicle for political power and expression; it challenges traditional conceptions about natural law and natural rights; and it even attacks the notion that man is a rational creature (especially in the unit on Freud). But this does not mean that the approach is not justifiable in the context of our society. We will return to this issue in a moment, but let us first look briefly at the second criticism that has been leveled at the curriculum: that it seems geared mainly to white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants.

As is the case with the first criticism, this one is correct in the sense that it reflects a true observation of the curriculum. This is the case not because the course is designed to promote any particular group in the society but rather because it is designed for children who are mainly from a particular group. The curriculum grows out of, and is directed toward, individuals who have experienced reality in ways that are accurately characterized by the term Wasp. Again, I make no apologies for this fact--quite to the contrary, I am pleased with the curriculum to the extent that it has been geared for those students with whom I have been working. This does not rule out the possibility of making the curriculum relevant for other segments of the society. Not at all, and I am presently trying to rework the present course in ways which would make it potentially meaningful for two general groups within American society, Negroes and Indians.

How might one employ the Identity and Democracy model in teaching minority segments of American society? In sketching an answer to this question, it should first be noted that there would be no significant alteration in the liberal democratic biases of the course. One of the objectives for the present curriculum is to promote an orientation toward the world which will increase an individual's rational actions within the limits of our society, and the only qualification that might be made here with respect to the Negro would be to suggest that in

many instances one is not aiming at an increase in such action, but rather at an initiation.

An identity curriculum for Negroes might begin with the basic psychological concepts. (In many respects this task would be easy to the extent that the Negro faces a unique and painful problem in defining himself in a white dominated culture, and he is vitally interested and acutely aware when it comes to matters of self-definition.) A second step, quite different from the curriculum as now taught, might be to explore some of the African roots of the Negroes' heritage, using the all-too-few available sources on this subject and then examine some of the ways in which slavery impressed a new and tragic sense of identity on the Negro American. (This step is similar to the exploration of the Judeo-Christian tradition in the course as now taught--instead of going to Europe for the historical foundations, one goes to Africa.) At this point, it would be valuable to present a picture of the nineteenth century Wasps' world, especially his liberal-democratic faith, and throughout the remainder of the course one could deal with the Negroes' persistent attempts to attain that which his white brothers already possessed.

Woven into the historical narrative would be the Negroes' general acceptance of the basic tenets of the "master culture." It would be pointed out that the Negro, often when still literally in chains, "identified with" the dominant elements of a democratic dream. This general theme, the acceptance of the creed in spite of slavery (and because of slavery, too), would give special consideration to the various ways in which the Negro has been, and still is, responding to the challenges and threats which his society holds for him. There are many possibilities for translating such ideas into curriculum. One might take several historical models--like Booker T. Washington, DuBois, Garvey, etc.--and trace them into the present controversy about what means the Negro should use to achieve his rights. Thus one could make the identity ideas relevant by direct reference to options which a Negro has for defining himself in relation to his world. For example, looking at two extreme possibilities, a Negro can buy thousands of devices to help straighten his hair, lighten his skin, i. e., make him more "white"; or he can accept his hair and color, and take pride in them.<sup>1</sup> References to problems of self-concept in relation to immediate experiences could provide, especially with the historical dimension, a new awareness about important choices that are available to both the individual and also the group.

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<sup>1</sup> One interesting and necessary point to consider is the extent to which all men seemingly engage in behavior that suggests a certain universality to the idea of changing one's physical being. (Lighter skinned people, for example, spend long hours trying to darken themselves.)

I will not attempt here to list specific sources and materials that might be used in teaching the identity course to Negroes. Suffice it to say that there are many exciting possibilities for the task. The problem would be to choose from an abundance of books, magazines, films, and community resources-- the problem would be partially solved by the immediate scene ( for example, picking up magazines from the local news stand, inviting speakers in, analysing one's immediate family structure, etc. ). Questions of a direct, personal nature would serve the curriculum well.

I am hesitant about advocating this curriculum for Negroes, for it is important that whites think twice before coming forth with the "answers" for the "Negro problem." I do think, however, that the curriculum has constructive possibilities for helping Negroes better grasp their place in space and time, and this matter of spatial and temporal self-definition is acute, especially for the ghetto Negro.<sup>1</sup> I am aware that much of what has been written here is quite irrelevant to the extent that learning contexts for the Negro are most often radically inferior to those of white Americans.

Another group within our society that might benefit from a course of this nature is the American Indian. If I were to teach this curriculum to Indians, I would begin by offering the basic identity concepts, and then move into the past by considering some of the identity models that would be appropriate in looking at early American Indians. (Hopefully it would be possible to construct a model for the particular group of Indians with whom one were working.) The next step would be to examine the tragic historical encounter between the Indians and the European explorers, settlers, and later the military representatives of the United States government. Special emphasis would go to an understanding of the white American's policy of extermination and incarceration, and the responses of the Indian to the challenge of the "white man." These responses could be categorized to suggest various ways in which men react when their lives (including their psychological lives ) are challenged and threatened. It appears to me that it would be difficult to find appropriate sources on this whole issue, especially since so much has been "covered up" (rationalized or repressed) by the society which has been responsible for the near genocide of the Indian; but there are good sources, and, as with the Negro curriculum, much could be done with the immediate context.

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<sup>1</sup> For a very powerful self-analysis of an identity transition from the "simple location" of a ghetto life to the historical mindedness of a great cosmopolitan leader, read Malcolm X's Autobiography (N.Y.: 1964).



#### D. Justification

Time and again, especially in the social studies area, one confronts the problem of justifying one's ideas, attitudes, and values as they bear on the problem of indoctrination. Sensitive teachers often function in fear of committing the most sinful of sins in this respect, and as a consequence they often assume that the only good teaching (and the only good textbook) is that which involves a variety of viewpoints on any given subject, or perhaps allows the student to draw all of his own conclusions. The way many social studies teachers approach this issue, and the way many other teachers approach (or fail to approach) the same issue, is very often the result of a superficial understanding of what constitutes indoctrination in a democratic society. In this part of the report I will suggest a way of looking at this perplexing problem which will hopefully minimize some of the unnecessary guilt feelings which so often plague those working in the social studies area.

There are two general considerations which will arise in this section: the nature of the identity and democracy curriculum as it bears on the problem of indoctrination; and the extent to which the entire educational system presents a special problem in this respect.

In Part I of this paper it was suggested that the existential proposition is a logical extension of democratic theory. In teaching students that they are their own authorities, that their choices help determine both their world and also themselves within that world, one is perhaps naive in the face of what we know about human life; on the other hand, there seem to be no other position that make sense without surrendering our notion of the democratic process.

In Identity and Democracy, students are not only presented with a model that explicitly reinforces the liberal democratic notion about man's ability to make, and take responsibility for, the laws under which he lives, but also given a personality model which says, in effect, you make yourself, you are in a process of becoming, you are not--as the orthodox Freudian might tell you--completely determined by what has gone before. This position can be viewed as a thinly veiled crusade for "the power of positive thinking," or it might be just another case of "pop psych" (for those that like Time magazine's educational analyses), but the burden of proof must rest with the central concern, which is neither the critics nor the teachers, but rather the students who have been exposed to the curriculum.

One of the strongest points of the piece of curriculum is the extent to which it encourages students to direct criticism at itself. That is, for example, students are asked to consider the extent to which the historical structuring is itself an irrational response to events and circumstances in recent history; using Erikson's concepts about the ways in which "ideology" is appealing to those seeking to establish for themselves a personal sense of identity, students are thus asked to



examine the extent to which the historical framework (and even the identity concepts) constitutes an "ideological response" to the uncertainties of our age. The historical assumption here is that reason is something which has developed in history, and can be used in an attempt to understand historical reality, including reason as part of that reality. Thus, students are encouraged to ask: "To what extent are extended notions of spatial and temporal reality necessary to rational control?" In answering, or trying to answer, that question, they are engaged in an examination and evaluation of the course, and of their own thinking in relation to it. The bedrock faith from which the curriculum springs is evident in this process: in order to ask the question, or try to answer it, the student must grasp himself in an extended temporal context. Those students who are able to enter into this kind of dialogue are already acting on the faith which is fundamental to historical thinking. Thus, the course is designed to work with an orientation that already has some manifestation in thought; it is designed to nourish the seeds of historical thinking which are within the student, to raise him to a new level of consciousness through choosing with him to participate in reason and in history. In the final analysis, therefore, the curriculum necessitates both a choice and also an act of faith--these cannot be separated--, and what is unique here is that the students are made consciousness of this fact.

How is one justified in teaching this kind of orientation toward man and history?; who is to say that this interpretation of reality is valid? In dealing with these questions we should consider two things: first, the extent to which one is justified in teaching any kind of interpretation of reality, including those of the arts and the natural sciences; and second, the more general issue, which is the problem of the "captive audience" in our educational system.

One may or may not teach a child to think historically by simply presenting him with "the facts," or perhaps with a dozen different interpretations of the facts. At first glance, however, this kind of approach would appear to be the most democratic--after all, we must not force our views of reality onto the child, we must let him learn to interpret for himself. This, of course, is a superficial approach to the issue.

When one teaches the student five different interpretations of history, or no interpretation for that matter, one is in fact offering a particular kind of interpretation, a particular orientation toward reality, past and future. When I say to a student "there are ten different ways to interpret the American Revolution," I am offering him my historiographical orientation. The same is true if I say there are fifty interpretations, or there are as many interpretations as there are interpreters. By the same token, if I tell the student that history has no predictive power, or that history is a valuable means for critical thinking, I am giving the student my interpretation. Is it more democratic to teach the child the process through which historians approach the past, then it is to teach the child the conclusions at which historians have arrived? This is no easy question. If I say that everyone's interpretation is as valid as everyone else's, then am I suggesting that

my views are not, in fact, one interpretation and therefore not subject to the general rule? And if I start teaching the child how to think like the historian (presumably like the one(s) under whom I studied), am I not, in fact, playing God in selecting the methodology of some historians over and above the methodology of others? (How certain can we be that one methodology is really better than another?--is Norman O. Brown really less acceptable than David Potter in this respect?) One could say that he is teaching the child relativity in the best, democratic sense, but is one willing to recognize the relativity of one's own views about relativity? For example, most of us would claim that Abraham Lincoln was a great leader with a broad democratic vision, but how many of us would teach our children his interpretation of history?

I am raising these points in hopes of making the reader just as frustrated as I am in attempting to struggle with them. One thing should be clear: so long as one is fixated on the idea that offering students particular interpretations of reality is bad, then one is caught in a very painful dilemma, in fact, one may be paralyzed by the dilemma. This is not strictly an issue for the social studies curriculum--one could broaden the base of this discussion and perhaps produce even more frustration. For example, who should decide what "subject areas" a child "takes?"; or, in fact, should the educational experience be chopped up into subjects? Our society "tells" the child in many ways that the world, his reality, can be viewed in dozens of different ways. While in school, the child learns how to read and write, and then he takes history, physics, biology, art, literature, etc., and supposedly, after a successful encounter with each subject, he is an educated person. Whether intended or not, each of these subject areas is often taught as if it were the interpretation of reality, and one effect, I suspect, is that the child "throws up his hands" (at least psychologically), and proclaims that it is all irrelevant to his life. The school fragments the child's world--there is much more emphasis on analysis than there is on synthesis. What justification can the school have for approaching reality in this manner?

In attempting to answer this question, I want to suggest that: there is no ultimate resolution for the dilemma; It arises in a context of choice, and is seemingly necessary to that context. We live in a society which was established in an effort to provide for differences--the frustration is built into the democratic process. Thus, the problem of indoctrination cannot be separated from a more general consideration about the role of ideas in a democratic society. I have implied that democracy rests on a process. Let us consider this process for a moment.

The democratic system which we have developed has as its objective the preservation of a process. Those who established the system from which modern democracy has emerged were themselves much confused over the problem of how to create unity and stability without sacrificing pluralism and individualism--they sought to solve this problem by establishing a system, but this was a matter of misplaced emphasis. Madisonian's plan was an elaborate system of checks, balances,

and separations of power--he assumed that human rights would be preserved and democratic progress insured when competing interests (ideological as well as economic) were channelized within a system of legal devices designed to crush, or "filter out," all "factions." Thus, from the very beginning, the notion of a system balancing off or filtering out ideas has been a part of the American conception of how democratic society should operate. <sup>1</sup>

The proverbial "every schoolboy" will tell us that the Constitutional system was quite successful, but the schoolboy is not entirely correct. Most political scientists admit that democracy has progressed within the limits established by Constitutional devices, but often the progress resulted despite, not because of, the filtration system. E. E. Schattschneider points out that the major source of modern democracy has been a legal and theoretical "outlaw," party politics: "The parties created democracy, or perhaps more accurately, modern democracy is a by-product of party competition." <sup>2</sup> The system rested on a "colossal over-simplification" with respect to the potential role of conflicting and competing ideas in democratic society. "What never seems to have occurred to the authors of the Constitution...is that parties might be used as beneficent instruments of popular government."<sup>3</sup> Apparently Madison could not envisage the way in which a particular kind of interest group, the party, could be organized to promote and preserve, rather than endanger, the general welfare. As a consequence his system was designed to restrict and control every kind of interest.

The point here is that political theory and a system based thereupon were not the major factors contributing to the growth of modern democratic institutions--if this were the case most Communist nations would be well on their way to political democracy--, it was the extralegal process of party competition which was the crucial determinant. Where major strides have been made in advancing modern democracy, it has been through a process of competition, where points of view have been organized and promoted to capture the votes of an electorate. Party competition rather than a system of legal devices stimulated, and still stimulates, the expansion of and service to an electoral base. Herein lies the fundamental difference between our democracy and, let us say, the "democracy" of Soviet Russia (or of the one party sections of this country for that matter). A very large percentage of the Russian electorate casts votes in every election--the lack of competing parties accounts for the totalitarian nature of that society. (In spite of the first ten Amendments, our own system breaks down where there is one party control.)

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<sup>1</sup> Federalist #10 is quite clear on this point.

<sup>2</sup> Party Government (NY: 1942), 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 8 .



Within the Madisonian system there was never any effective filter set in operation--the struggle for power in the early national period erupted in party strife; Jefferson opened the way to that great "evil," the faction, but, of course, the evil never materialized; the conflicting political factions interacted in a process which developed its own internal controls. The party was something that Madison could not understand. Party process forced those who sought power to appeal to an electoral base, and that base, it was soon discovered, could be expanded and perhaps captured. The Constitution provided the structure through which this process took shape, but it was the process, not the structure, which was the source of democratic progress.

Far from filtering out ideas and programs, the American political process encourages major competing parties to develop and promote positions which will have appeal for the ever expanding electorate. In many instances the positions taken by competing parties appear meaningless or perhaps insignificant--in part this is the result of the common base to which each must appeal--, but on the other hand in times of social unrest and upheaval (as in 1932) the alternatives often reflect significant differences, and the electorate can then judge accordingly.

It seems safe to conclude that democratic progress has not rested on the system which Madison envisaged as necessary to the preservation of individual dignity in an atmosphere of pluralism--party process has been the bulwark of modern democracy. This process encouraged the formulation of competing ideas and programs, and completely ignored Madison's fears of same.

As in the political realm, economic progress has been stimulated through the competition of various interests which were forced to organize and seek the "votes" of the citizenry. In the early national period several decades passed before autonomous and competitive interests were able to emerge as servants of the people. Early Americans were bothered by the charter and rightly so, for its special privileges were originally in the hands of the few; the charter was a source of monopoly, in many instances an "arm of the state." It was the economic manifestation of faction in the Madisonian sense of that term. Gradually, however, and with the halting help of the Supreme Court, some Americans recognized that economic interests, no less than political ideas, could be checked by the public will so long as those interests were forced to compete in an open market of alternatives.

Oversimplified as this discussion might be, it still seems reasonable to assert that this party phenomenon, in both the political and economic sectors of American life, has been a powerful determinant in the growth of modern democracy. Parties are not the frosting of democracy, they are the cake.

How does this relate to the questions we have raised about indoctrination? It relates because it seems to me that within the realm of public education,



Americans have quite often, and unthinkingly, allowed the system to control the process, rather than vice versa, and the result is that we now have an educational context in which students (and parents) are virtually forced to accept the notion of a captive audience. Starting with the average classroom, and from there moving through the system, one finds that most teachers are in control of captive audiences--they are guaranteed a certain number of pupils, five periods a day, five days a week; and the principal of the school in turn is guaranteed his captive audience, his teachers and students are fixed into their respective revolving slots; finally, the superintendent has an entire system under his control, he makes decisions in conjunction with a group of elected officials, many of whom have never set foot in the schools for which they make their decisions. And thus, in a kaleidoscopic symphony, the system fulfills its filtering function --it kills the spirit of faction, it assures the community that no particular parties will dominate; indeed, it kills ideas, for ideas are dangerous in any totalitarian atmosphere. When controversy rears its ugly head, it is squashed by the devices that have been built into the system for precisely that purpose.

It could be argued that teachers are free to move, that families are free to change neighborhoods, that citizens are free to choose new school committees, etc., but how real are these freedoms? The basic problem, it seems, is that neither parents, students, nor teachers themselves are in strong positions for choosing between competing alternatives--the school, the classes, the day to day scheduling, the system works against democratic process.

The typical teachers' meeting is a good example of how the system functions. Most teachers are justifiably fearful of creating controversy in front of their principal or superintendent or even department head. Thus, the school authorities exert power which, from a democratic viewpoint, can only be characterized as tyrannical. I recently heard of a superintendent who refused his teachers the privilege of assembling to discuss any ideas or problems without his being present (this reminds me of Winston Churchill's famous statement about the way dictators cringe when even a "little mouse of thought" creeps into the room). Theoretically, of course, the people have choice about those individuals and ideas which are affecting the lives of their children; but, where are the decisions made? How are they made? To assert that the school committee automatically creates some kind of indirect democracy is to insult the intelligence of most thoughtful people.

Democracy rests in part on three ingredients: (1) popular consent, (2) alternatives, and (3) the legal structure that can be employed to safeguard both. In American public education we have no consent or alternatives in the most basic sense of those terms, and thus in a very real sense we have a totalitarian system. In suggesting that democratic process is missing in American education, it is not my purpose to suggest that the party model for politics can be neatly applied to the educational sector; it is to suggest, however, that when basic questions arise about education, there are few real choices open to American citizens.

Thomas Jefferson viewed formal education as the sine qua non of a free society; he noted that "if a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be." But Jefferson, with his deep faith in public education, never imagined anything like the compulsory system that exists in our society today, and he would no doubt be appalled at the extent to which formal education has become a fetish for many Americans. For Jefferson there was no stigma attached to a person who did not finish school, in fact, his proposals were devised to allow for "dropouts." Today, the pressures exerted on youth to travel the long road through college, and even beyond, are frightening to put it mildly. It is possible that the pressures in this system are actually detrimental to mental health. It often makes little difference whether a man knows much or little, he will be discriminated against in our society unless he has fulfilled the de facto obligations of the educational system. This point is worth noting not simply because of the rising suicide rate in the late adolescent age bracket, but also because it represents a fundamental challenge to certain aspects of the philosophy upon which our society rests. When society starts telling its members that they must go to school for one third of their lives--which is not the same thing as telling them they should be educated, and we must keep this distinction in mind--, it is also telling them something quite specific about how they must "pursue happiness"; in other words, when this happens, the society usurps one of the rights for which it was initially founded, to insure for each individual his natural rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. With the advent of compulsory education, this society has created for itself a problem, that of the captive audience.

In an article entitled "Education and Community," Donald Oliver and Fred Newmann have raised some interesting and provocative points which relate to this issue:

In the end, public schools attained a virtual monopoly on the life of youth between ages six and sixteen. This development represents a clear shift in political philosophy. It signifies a blurring, if not total rejection, of the distinction between society and government, formerly so crucial to the American democrat; that is, it indicates a loss of faith in the ability of a pluralistic system of private associations to provide an education that would benefit both the individual and also his nation.<sup>1</sup>

Oliver and Newmann maintain that the educational system does not provide meaningful choices for the individual, that it reinforces a "great society" notion about what the good life should be, and that it fails to provide a context in which individuals can participate in a democratic community--the task is to restore the "missing community."

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<sup>1</sup> Harvard Educational Review (Vol. 37, winter 1967), 80.

The fact that the present system has a built-in problem with respect to how one justifies teaching one piece of curriculum over another, does not mean that there are no guidelines to be followed. Teaching the student how to read and write, and how to respect and communicate with others, are motherhood and apple pie objectives. On the other hand, the means to these ends--for example, how one goes about teaching respect and communication--are another matter, and it is pretty difficult to establish a correct, democratic way. Because the areas of choice are narrow, it is important that anyone developing curriculum provides the public with a rationale for his proposals, and it is important that the rationale be subjected to intelligent criticism from many different positions both inside and also outside the school system. It could be argued that as long as the audience is captured, perhaps some kind of multi-dimensional approach to curriculum objectives is most appropriate. Yet, there are dangers in this, and I have tried to indicate some of them in this report. For example, it is my feeling that the present system, with all of its subjects and grades, etc., is detrimental to the student's developing an historical mode of consciousness. Thus, I might try to change the entire system in promoting my curriculum objectives. This, I think, does not increase the chances for indoctrination, it simply changes the nature of the indoctrination which, unfortunately, is built into the system.

Hopefully the above paragraphs have demonstrated two quite different but closely related points bearing on the issue of indoctrination: (1) that the piece of curriculum under consideration here is designed to promote a democratic orientation in the student; and (2) that within the present educational system it is very difficult to justify any piece of curriculum, to the extent that the present system is characterized by the captive audience.

### E. Conclusion

Dreams are never complete, and in the flow of history they continually require analysis and reinterpretation. If this does not happen, factors which once supported freedom and progress become the agents of stagnation and destruction. The human being has entered into creation with a capacity and a passion that distinguishes him from all other creatures on our planet. His ability to create is only matched by his ability to destroy. One suspects that even if human life were to cease, the processes of becoming would continue, perhaps here on earth, perhaps out there, or perhaps both here and out there as part of a greater whole. Who can pretend to know about such things? All we know is that something will be lost without man; and we know that man will be lost when he stops dreaming. Let us dream a future for man, and let us invest in that future with our capacity and our passion for creation.

Consciousness is a living thing, yet in many ways unborn; it is part of that becoming which eludes our every attempt to know it completely. When it falls heavy upon us, we sigh with Prufrock: do we dare disturb the universe? The answer, of course, is that we have no choice. We disturb the universe with every



fact of our being. There is no law that says that we must drown at the sound of our human voices (and no assurance that we will not). "Man is a rope, tied between beast and overman--a rope over an abyss. A dangerous across, a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous shuddering and stopping." What has happened to the wisdom of that madman, Nietzsche? "What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end: what can be loved in man is that he is an overture and a going under." <sup>1</sup> Thoughts are the stuff from which ropes are constructed; thoughts are the stuff from which bridges are built; let us join hands in a new affirmation of consciousness.

I am aware that as I express these thoughts, humanity continues to tear at its own living body, and, as in times past, ours is a bleeding and broken body. I am also aware that much of the blood that pours from our wounds is let in the name of freedom. We are told that we must kill because we must preserve freedom. The danger here, and a danger throughout this report, is perhaps that man sometimes develops too much optimism about his capacity to make the world and make himself--one cannot deny that many of those who are most willing to sacrifice themselves and the world in a holy cause are optimistically, historically minded. Optimism about man's historical potential can easily develop into a crusade which sacrifices its ends in its means.

If we accept a definition of sanity in terms of man's striving to promote conditions in which freedom and health are everyday realities, then we must conclude that in many respects today's world is an asylum for the insane. The reasons for this condition are many and varied. An overly optimistic mankind, the flowering of the Enlightenment, is one element in this tragedy. But lest we over-react, we should consider other factors as well. One of the most generally accepted explanations for the present insanity is that man's psychological progress has not kept pace with his technological progress. But whatever the explanation, the task seems to me to be quite clear: we must promote in ourselves and in others an orientation toward reality which, through rational calculation, will contribute to lifting man's psyche out of the mythological past and into the historical present. We must question the holy crusaders to find out just how much mythological porridge they are feeding us; and we must be conscious of our consciousness as a weapon in the cause, choosing our thinking, and coloring our consciousness with a respect for historical man. There has been progress--we could blow our collective brains out tomorrow morning and we could not alter this fact--and part of this progress is our increasing awareness that we can choose the way in which we will live, and the way in which we will die. To think historically, is to think tragically, so let us embrace death, and let us embrace that which is dying within us, within our society, and within our world. One cannot think historically without doing this. James Baldwin has written a beautiful description of man embracing the tragedy of life; he might well have been writing about man embracing that which is historical:

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<sup>1</sup> Thus Spoke Zarathustra, in The Portable Nietzsche, Walter Kaufmann ed. (NY: 1954), 126-127



Life is tragic simply because the earth turns and the sun inexorably rises and sets, and one day, for each of us, the sun will go down for the last, last time. Perhaps the whole root of our trouble, the human trouble, is that we will sacrifice all the beauty of our lives, will imprison ourselves in totems, taboos, crosses, blood sacrifices, steeples, mosques, races, armies, flags, nations, in order to deny the fact of death, which in the only fact we have. It seems to me that one ought to rejoice in the fact of death--ought to decide, indeed, to earn one's death by confronting with passion the conundrum of life. One is responsible to life: It is the small beacon in that terrifying darkness from which we come and to which we shall return. <sup>1</sup>

This is not a mandate for mourning, however, for the clown has two faces, and while elevating life in the face of death, we must not forget how to laugh and sing and dance. We must choose play--it is the only way--we must resurrect the first little pig. This means that we must not be guilty of grimness. American education tends to be a very grim affair, and we educators have a habit of taking ourselves too seriously. Laughter is as important as knowledge to the healing of humanity's body, so let us play with life in our search for salvation. <sup>2</sup>

One of the educator's tasks is to help individuals define themselves as creative agents. The existential model calls for prophecy which is compatible with a democratic vision of man; it calls for interpretation of the present in relation to the past which in turn is based on conscious considerations about the future. Those who accept this model will resign themselves to a conception of history as a never ending process. No curriculum based on this model could ever be complete--it is inconceivable to envisage existential history that does not change as events and circumstances change.

As presented here, action is in part conditioned by the way one construes his circumstance; and this, in important respects, is influenced by one's orientation in and toward historical change. Hopefully the educator-historian, to the extent that he identifies with this model, will enter history as a more creative agent.

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<sup>1</sup> The Fire Next Time (NY:-1963), 105-106.

<sup>2</sup> See Konrad Lorenz's discussion on the need for both knowledge and also humor as means for human survival--On Agression (NY: 1963), chapter fourteen, "Avowal of Optimism."

## APPENDIX

The following are included in the appendix:

- an introduction and an historical essay, entitled "A Crisis in Self-definition," which have been utilized in a senior level course which Mr. John Huie and I are now teaching at St. Mark's School of Texas (95-120)
- a shorter essay, designed for a unit on the identity and democracy curriculum, that was taught in the Harvard-Newton Summer Program, 1967 (121-131)
- a brief discussion of some of the materials and methods which have been utilized in teaching the course (132-137).

A CRISIS IN SELF-DEFINITION

### A Crisis in Self-definition

Definition of a Problem. Many intelligent critics think that if man works hard to find solutions to the many problems he has produced and inherited, nine chances out of ten mankind will be destroyed in the near future, perhaps within the next several decades. These same critics point out that if man does not work hard to solve the giant problems which confront him, the chances are ten out of ten that the end will come.

The "bomb," of course, is always high on the list of problems; but one also finds such things as national rivalry, economic insecurity, population explosion, diminishing natural resources, etc. Some people even think that the insect population could perhaps one day engulf us; others claim that we will poison ourselves (as we are already starting to do in some of our huge urban centers); and more than a few people think that man might really want to destroy himself, that man's greatest problem might in fact be his own suicidal impulses, his desire to escape life. These latter critics ask some very pointed and interesting questions which are not easily answered: for example, if man really wants to live, why does he continue to develop weapons of destruction when both mathematical and historical probability indicate that such increases only increase chances for self-destruction?; why does man, at least the American man, spend nine-tenths of his defense budget on death machinery, and so little on positive programs to insure peace?--why, in fact is it so difficult for him to conceive of defense in constructive rather than destructive terms? (When one hears of defense one naturally thinks about guns, planes, bombs, and boats; why doesn't one think about houses, health, learning, and love?); why is it, for example, that so many people continue to smoke in spite of the fact that they know it kills them, or at least takes a substantial chunk of their lives?

This represents a rather gloomy picture, and perhaps you feel the situation is better than this. In any event, we can all agree that if man is to survive, if he is to fight for that one chance or more, it is important that he recognize the problems which challenge his existence. (Most every doctor will tell us that one of the first steps in curing most patients is to help them recognize the nature of their problems--perhaps this is true for men collectively as well as for individuals.)

One of the problems which has not been mentioned in the above relates to a single and simple question, a question which is important to all human beings: the question is "who am I?" Many students of human behavior think that only when man can answer this question meaningfully and constructively can he deal effectively with other questions and problems.

This social studies course is based on the assumption that the question, "who am I?" is indeed important to our period of history, that it presents a basic



challenge for twentieth century man, and specifically for American man.

The question involves "identity"--creating, discovering, and defining oneself. The question is not as simple as it might first appear, for to have a sense of self-definition, one must be aware of more than the "simple present"; one must also know something of the past and of the future: "where have I been?" and "where am I going?" The present, after all, is only an abstraction, a moving point between what has been and what will be.

In periods of history where change is minimal, individuals are seldom confronted with identity problems. We can all think of places and times where an individual's sense of identity is relatively fixed and unchanging--especially where economic "roles" are stable, as is the case in most agricultural societies. But where one's place in society is subject to sudden and substantial changes, as in modern industrial societies, the problem of identity looms large.

In this course, we assume that identity is a problem for the modern American; we assume this in part because his world is changing so rapidly that it is difficult for him to know where he will be or what he will be doing from day to day. For example, from an economic standpoint it is (as young people know) difficult to anticipate with certainty one's role in the society. At the age of twelve, Ben Franklin was quite certain that he would be a printer for the rest of his life, and he was (that was a couple of centuries ago); how many of us, at the age of twelve, or at the age of twenty for that matter, can be sure of what or who we are going to be?

One of the most interesting aspects of recent criticism is its emphasis on the problems that many of the society's most "privileged" children seem to be having in finding their place in the world. In an excellent study, entitled The Uncommitted, Kenneth Keniston notes that what is new in the present situation is the extent to which "those at the top" are actually choosing not to take constructive parts in the life of their society. Thus, while we have many problems that exist among the so-called lower classes, we also have some with roots in the sophisticated and prosperous suburbs. Keniston's study is not based on statistics taken from lower class, urban areas, his statistics are based on interviews with students at Harvard University--these students had their secondary school experiences in the likes of Newton High School, New Trier, and St. Mark's.

But ours is not solely a concern with young people. In this course we assume that adults as well as young people are somewhat confused about their values, their goals, their lives; we do not assume that this is something that is fixed in "human nature," but rather that it is part of the historical context in which we live. Often one hears remarks to the effect that nothing in history really changes, that problems today are no different than they were 20 or 2,000 years ago. This position, we feel has some validity, but only to a point. Man has always been engaged in some form of aggression, but he has not always had atomic power at his disposal, nor has he always had an automobile in which he can kill himself and his fellow creatures;

woman has always given birth to children, but she has not always read Dr. Spock; and youth have always rebelled, but they have not always had high schools and colleges in which they can organize their rebellion, or from which they can "drop out."

Our concern, then, is with that which is unique in our behavior. In no way is this a refutation of that which is unchanging, but it is a concern which rests on the assumption that man has rational control over himself and his world only when he does recognize that which is new and changing.

Although our approach is designed to look at problems and crises in present behavior, this does not necessarily mean that we are taking a negative approach to our world. It is assumed that problems and crises have both a destructive and also a constructive dimension--childbirth is a good example of how creation can be fraught with crisis.

We have pointed to several challenges which confront the human animal as he whirls through space in the latter part of the twentieth century; and we have suggested that identity is itself a challenge for those living at this time. We have not attempted to soft-peddle the seriousness of the scene, but rather we have indicated that it might well be a creative opportunity as well as a serious challenge. It is possible that we are living at a time when creativity and knowledge have begun to burst the bounds which society has imposed on them. Often we hear that institutions can lag behind new ideas about what is desirable in human affairs. Almost all men know, for example, that total war today would destroy virtually all life on this planet, and yet, we still have not created institutions that replace war, or the threat of war, for settling disputes among human beings.

The course which we have designed is our attempt to define and understand certain aspects of modern behavior; we are not pretending to supply solutions or answer questions, however, for it is our conviction that in a democratic society there is only one place where such solutions and answers can be legitimately found, and that is in the minds and the hearts of the people. Our concern, then, is with making dialogue, and self-understanding a more constructive force within the context of an open society.

## I. Identity and Western Historical Development:

### A) Renaissance, Reformation, and Rising Middle Class

In looking at so-called primitive man, we find that he had no individual sense of identity as we speak of the term today. He did not feel sharp differences between an "I" and a "you" and an "it." He experienced his world as a "thou," a living, breathing process in which he shared life with other living things. One book on this subject suggests that the primitive mind

looks, not for the "how" but to the "who" when it looks for a cause. Since the...world is a "Thou" confronting early man, he does not expect to find an impersonal law regulating a process. He looks for a purposeful will committing an act. If the rivers refuse to rise, it is not suggested that the lack of rainfall on distant mountains adequately explains the calamity. When the river does not, it has refused to rise. The river, or the gods, must be angry with the people who depend on the inundation. (Henri Frankfort, et. al., Before Philosophy; Pelican Book: 1949, 24.)

In attempting to understand this kind of experience, we might try to recall some experiences from our own childhoods, such as those times when we were alone in dark rooms, with all of those "living monsters" that were plotting to get us: or, we might recall a time when walking through the rainy woods at dusk, the whole world seemed alive with ghosts and phantoms. Apparently for the primitives, as for many ancients, the world never stopped "breathing down their necks," theirs was a completely mythical world, lacking the kind of subjective-objective orientation which characterizes ours. For example, primitive man could, so he thought, capture an animal by drawing it on the cave wall with an arrow in its heart. For him this image was not simply an image or copy of something, rather it was a living something, a power which he had captured and manipulated through his act, through his art. For him, the spirit of life was not confined to particular objects in particular places, it pervaded all things, and it was sometimes subject to man's control, as well as a controlling power over man. In some respects, the lives of our primitive and ancient ancestors must have been much like our own babyhood: babies do not know fine distinctions between themselves and their surroundings, they bite on rattles or hands without any distinct awareness that one is an "it" and the other an "I" or a "me." Early childhood is a world of myth and magic, and this point applies to mankind's historical childhood.

We can not do justice to the way in which our primitive friends must have experienced themselves and their world; we do know, however, that the idea of being separated from other people and things, of being "individuals" apart from others, was not in their consciousness as it is in ours. Early man had no sense of individual identity as we have today--the very fact that the term, the cluster of symbols, for "individual," was missing, is evidence that there could have been no experience closely paralleling our own in this respect.

It also appears that in earliest human times, as in some primitive societies today, man was not conscious of time in the same sense that we are. Our idea of single, separable events happening at distinct intervals, in never ending processes stretching over years and centuries is a relatively recent phenomenon in human consciousness. It seems probable that most of the human creatures that have inhabited this planet were never aware of themselves as living in time processes involving



past, present, and future. The idea of historical change, especially of historical progress, like the idea of the individual, is not a universal experience for human beings. Our sense of identity is, in this respect, a unique, historical phenomenon--and one which might eventually be replaced by some other mode of experiencing the world.

Our way of experiencing change and time has developed through history in a manner which is in part available for human study. The Hebrews, and later the Christians, were instrumental in bringing about the present kind of historical consciousness. The Hebrews thought themselves related to a "Thou," God, and this very fact, their thinking about a relationship with a "Thou," separated them from those who experienced, rather than thought about, a living spirit in the world. Also, the Hebrews speculated on their relation to a single force, God, and this force was both behind and also within history--this sets them apart from other ancients who still experienced spirit in-and-of objects, actions, and events. The God of Hebrew thought is not the object or event itself, He is not the Sun or the Moon (He is not in-and-of the Sun), but rather the transcendent force, the power behind and above man, events, and history itself. This fact helps explain how Western man began his journey toward experiencing himself as a separate self, as an individual, apart from other selves and objects in the world.

As long as man thought that spirit was in-and-of the world, traveling about like so much electric power, to be tapped by those who knew where the current ran, as long as that was the case, man experienced himself as an inseparable part of a larger "living body"; however, when the transcending God appeared, distinctions began to sharpen. The fact that the Hebrew felt a need to obey God is another way of saying that he feared what would happen if he were separated from God. We can thus see the beginning of the idea that man might be separated, that man might be "a-part" in the world. Christianity furthered this developing consciousness of experiencing one's self as a self, as an individual. The Christian emphasis on "atonement" (at-one-ment), on making one's self whole through Christ, through the "body and the blood," is illustrative of the growing sense of potential isolation of the individual. Previously men had experienced themselves as part of a larger, living body, the world was perceived as alive, and man was not aware of himself as a separate living being in relation to other living and non-living entities. Because of this former feeling, the heightened sense of self often created a need to return to a sense of wholeness--one does not seek wholeness unless one feels partness. Christianity, in this respect, reflected the growing "individuation" (sensing oneself as "individual" in relation to others). Writing in the late Middle Ages, Dante described what he thought Hell might be like--at the worst spot in his Inferno one finds man isolated, frozen in ice, not burning, not fusing or melting together with other men, but completely "ice-o-lated." Man's fall was a fall into self-consciousness.

If we compare primitive and ancient experience with our own babyhood, and perhaps with some aspects of early childhood, we might compare the Judaeo-Christian phenomenon with childhood itself. As we grow, our realization of being someone apart from others, is something we experience in a series of steps that we take from about age two to age five. As we come to learn our names, as well as the names of others and other things, we learn of our potential strengths and weaknesses as individual human beings apart from others. This is often a frightening process, and the child sometimes wanders out into the world "on his own," only to discover that he is not ready for the journey, only to discover that he needs mommy and daddy. Like the Hebrews and the early Christians, as children we still have a definite sense of belonging, or "being," within a community, a family, and we are not fully aware of our potential, future independence; but we have taken our first tiny steps in that direction. The child is dependent on the family--he



will run to mother when he is threatened, he will melt into her arms. For Medieval man, the heir of Hebrew and early Christian thought, the Church was the "Mother Church," where Mary, the Holy Mother, awaited with open arms, providing warmth and security, protecting the faithful from the ice-o-lation which they feared.

It was in the "Great Transition" from the medieval to the Modern world--a period striding several centuries (from approximately the 13th to the 19th century)--that Western man's confrontation with himself as individual was most fully enacted. The Renaissance brought to Europe a new concern for man in his earthy life; and the Reformation, especially that part of Protestantism fostered by Luther and Calvin, heightened his sense of individualism. Protestantism placed much emphasis on the individual, and his direct relationship with God; the importance of the Church as an instrument of God, and the importance of the priest as a "middleman," were reduced; man could no longer depend on the security of a powerful community of believers to insure him of success in his search for salvation. In the 16th Century Luther and Calvin, especially Calvin, emphasized the terror of being an isolated atom in a disinterested universe--a universe whose ultimate plan was known only to the Creator.

The Renaissance and the Reformation did not do away with God; these two historical movements--the one emphasizing the importance of the individual in literature, art, and society in general, the other emphasizing man's individual confrontation with God (a confrontation lacking the support of Church or priest)--, were not attempts to refute Christian thinking. In fact, their intent was to enrich Christianity. However, they both helped produce deep cleavages in Western Christendom, cleavages which are still "shaking the foundations" of our civilization. Furthermore, the impact which these forces had was not confined to the world of external reality. Changes were "internal" as well. Many thinkers suggest that as Western man moved away from the restrictions of Medieval society, he also moved away from the securities which those restrictions had provided; thus man might have gained some freedom, but he was more insecure. Insecurity was the price for a new sense of individual freedom, the price for "leaving home." As one philosopher notes, there was a loss of "inner harmony":

All the great and undeniable progress made by the Renaissance and the Reformation were counterbalanced by a severe and irreparable loss. The unity and the inner harmony of medieval culture has been dissolved.... Assuredly the Middle Ages were not free from deep conflicts...but the ethical and religious foundation of medieval civilization was not seriously affected by these discussions... After the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries this basis was shaken; it could never regain its former solidarity. The hierarchic chain of being that gave to everything its right, firm, unquestionable place in the general order of things was destroyed. (Ernst Cassirer, The Myth of the State: New Haven; Yale U. Press: 1946, 169.)

Another thinker offers the following comment in reference to the same phenomenon:

The breakdown of the medieval system of feudal society had one main significance for all classes of society; the individual was left alone and isolated. He was free. This freedom had a two fold result. Man was deprived of the security he had enjoyed, of the unquestionable feeling of belonging, and he was torn loose from the world which had

satisfied his quest for security both economically and spiritually.  
(Erich Fromm, Escape From Freedom, N. Y. : 1941, 99.)

This breakdown was thus the historical basis for our individual sense of identity, it was the basis for our belief in the freedom and dignity of the individual, but, as noted it was also the basis for many of the insecurities that accompany this phenomenon.

Protestantism drove many to an obsession with time, with keeping busy, filling the day, scurrying to fill up moments which God had granted to his individual creatures. In Calvinism (especially that brand called Puritanism), the individual felt that his own life, his success or failure, was perhaps a sign of election, a sign of whether God had chosen him for salvation. (The Church, as we have stated above, could no longer assure him of this!) We should note here, however, that the emphasis on time was not simply a reaction out of fear, but perhaps also a means for greater control over the environment. As men became more conscious of time, and their individual relation to events and men in time, they increased their control over nature, over themselves--time consciousness, in this sense, helped man better regulate his life and the world about him. The Protestant Ethic, as this general attitude toward time is often termed, contributed to the development of modern economic life--one can see its influence in the thinking of Ben Franklin, as well as in the thinking of the Third Little Pig.

The changes of which we have been speaking, the new conception of individual in the context of the Renaissance and Reformation, were closely related to important economic alterations which were themselves eating away at the fabric of Medievalism. The medieval world rested on a Feudal economic structure; men within that structure were fixed in their economic roles. Peasants contracted with nobles to work and perhaps to fight when necessary and in turn they received protection from the nobles. The Feudal system was static in that one remained in the class in which he was born. This socio-economic system was well suited to the Catholic faith, and vice versa. The idea of life as a "veil of tears," and the idea of a reward afterlife, were appealing to the average person of the medieval period, for life was hard and promised few earthly rewards. The idea of being "fixed" in one's place on earth was compatible with the idea of serving one's heavenly master.

As trade and commerce began to develop, however (first on the Italian coast, then elsewhere in Europe), the structure of Feudalism was endangered. There is no simple explanation for the rise in trade and commerce that went hand in hand with the development of towns and cities. We do know, however, that the Crusades of the late middle ages brought many in contact with the rich trade routes of the eastern Mediterranean area. Furthermore, we know that the Feudal social system itself contained some seeds for its own destruction--Feudal estates, upon the death of the father, were often passed to the oldest son (primogeniture), and this forced some children to seek fortunes elsewhere. These children were not without resources. The estate having been gobbled up by an older brother, they might engage in some small manufacture, or establish themselves as financial resources for others, or get involved in tiny, yet growing, trading enterprises.

In time an increase in the health and wealth of a small "middle class" group ("middle" in that it was not the clergy or the landed nobility, nor was it the peasantry), helped produce a new attitude toward man and the world. Because the world, in many instances, had been good to him, the member of the middle class naturally placed more emphasis on the goodness of this world (not forgetting the importance of religion and

the afterlife, of course). This middle class man also stressed the importance of individualism, for it was as an individual, apart from Feudal interrelationships and collective security, that he had received rewards.

What we are describing here is not something which happened in a few years, or even in a few decades, and it was not something which happened everywhere throughout Europe at the same time (Feudal institutions and ideals prevailed in many parts of Europe well into this century); but it was a general economic change which did help produce "new men" who in turn contributed many of the ideas which we associate with the Renaissance and Reformation (and later, with the Enlightenment). It is no accident that the Renaissance took hold in the city-states of northern Italy where trade had produced prosperity and a new orientation toward this life. It is also no accident that Protestantism, with an emphasis on individual salvation and de-emphasis on church and priest, had its greatest successes in the towns and cities where the middle class had hung its shingle. The rise of a middle class was interwoven with the development of new ideas about man and history; that class contributed much to what we today refer to as "an individual sense of identity."

The changes which were taking place in economic and religious dimensions of the society helped give Western man a new sense of identity, a new self-definition, a new idea of who he was as a creature in relation to past and future; this new conception was more individualistic and more worldly than that of his medieval forefathers. And along with an increased awareness of individual self, there developed a new orientation toward those dimensions of reality we call time and space.

The Hebrews and later the Christians became conscious of time involving long periods of recorded change and action, and there was as much emphasis on the future as on the past. As well as looking into the past, the Prophets were continually looking into the future. Christianity contributed to this awareness with conceptions like the Second Coming, and Judgment Day. Also, the "missionary" zeal of Christianity sent men scurrying throughout the known world in search of lost souls. In the late medieval period, the Crusades heightened this exploratory process. The idea that all men could be saved contributed to the idea of mission, which meant spreading the Word throughout the world. Along with these general considerations was another, related to the breakdown of medieval institutions and authority--this was the desire to "escape" Europe which developed with the religious conflicts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Ideas about individual achievement and salvation helped change man's time and space conceptions in other ways also. Trading took men over the face of the earth, and involved business ventures that took long time periods. Records had to be kept, maps made, predictions ventured. Also, manufacturing--the little that there was during this period--required a heightened time-space consciousness, especially the ability to save time and money (capital) to insure future production and profits. (Clocks and clock-making became very important in this period of history.)

Many of the things we have just examined were not generally experienced by all Europeans, however, these changes were taking place, and they were to have a powerful determining influence on the "new world." Before we continue, let us review several of the points we have just made:

Primitive and ancient men do not experience themselves as "individuals" in the same sense that we do--theirs is a "world" of "Thou," and they perceive themselves in time-space



relations that lack our own subjective-objective orientation; their world "flows with life," and causation means "who," not "what." They do not grasp themselves as separate selves, living in relatively short time-space segments, in fact they do not grasp "history" as we do. For them, there is no "past," "present," and "future" as there is for us.

The Hebrews and Christians thought about a "Thou" behind and through history; their awareness of themselves as potentially "removed from," or out of favor with, the source of power (God), was an important step in man's growing self-consciousness as an individual; they helped broaden man's sense of "being" in long time sequences-- "history" as most of us perceive it today, was introduced by the Hebrews (the first book of the Bible reflects the careful emphasis which this tradition placed on recording "past" events).

The Renaissance and Reformation, along with the rising middle class, contributed to "individuation" (Fromm's term), and with respect to Western man's identity, these historical phenomena, interwoven as they were, also affected space-time perceptions, and in-so-doing, man's control and awareness of himself and the world around him was enhanced.

#### B) The Scientific Revolution, The Enlightenment, Nationalism

The breakdown of the medieval structure, which we have discussed in relation to the Renaissance, Reformation, ~~and the~~ rise of the Middle Class, provided a context in which new ideas and inventions were readily developed and adopted. Indeed, the Seventeenth Century is sometimes called the Century of Genius because so many ideas came to life in that period. Man's increasing control over space and time proceeded hand in hand with new ideas about the world and about human nature itself. For a moment, let us look at two of the most important thinkers of that period, and consider some of the ways in which their ideas helped shape a unique, Western sense of identity.

Isaac Newton was one of the men most responsible for new ideas in the early modern world. He took much of what others had found, added his own findings and insights, and "discovered" the "laws of gravity." Newton explained that all objects, both on earth and throughout the universe, were subject to certain universal laws--all movement and behavior were subject to those laws. Any encyclopedia can tell us what Newton's laws were, but no book will ever fully record the impact which they had upon the minds of those who followed Newton in history. In some important respects, Newtonian physics was a direct challenge to the kind of thinking, to the kind of identity, which had gone before, for it suggested that everything might be understood in terms of physical laws which could be discovered and used by men through an application of "reason." The idea of God, as an active Being, the mover behind all history, was no longer necessary for an explanation of why the apple fell to the ground, or why the planets circled the sun. Newton's laws could explain these!

Newton went far in taking man's thinking out of the realm of personal causation, that is, the realm where causes are seen in terms of "who," and into the realm of the objective law. Certainly many men had before, and since, spoken of God's laws, but not as mechanical instruments of causation. Newton took man far from the primitive approach:

Primitive thought naturally recognizes the relationship of cause and



effect, but it cannot recognize the view of an impersonal mechanical, and lawlike functioning of experience in our search for true causes, that is, causes which will always produce the same effect under the same conditions. We must remember that Newton discovered the concept of gravitation and also its laws by taking into account three groups of phenomena which are entirely unrelated to the merely perceptive observer: freely falling objects, the movements of the planets, and the alternation of the tides. Now the primitive mind cannot withdraw to that extent from perceptual reality (Frankfort, 24).

In an other respect, "nature's laws" disrupted the traditional view about man and God. It had long been assumed that certain individuals were selected or chosen by God to hold special positions of power and privilege on earth. The popes and the kings often claimed such special, "divine right" to rule, especially when men challenged their authority. With Newtonian thinking, however, the idea of divine right came under attack. As already mentioned, the idea that God actively moved behind events and objects was weakened by the new ideas about nature's laws, and it followed that the idea of God actively selecting one or more individuals to have special powers was also weakened. Since all men were subjected to the same physical laws it seemed reasonable to assume that all men were subject to the same social laws.

The man who perhaps best stated this kind of social law was John Locke. Locke was a contemporary of Newton, and Locke, quite appropriately, termed his political ideas, Natural Law. Natural Law political theory was an attempt to make man's social and political behavior as understandable in terms of lawfulness as the physical world had appeared to be in Newtonian theory. We are all familiar with certain of Locke's basic ideas--Jefferson wrote Locke into the Declaration of Independence. Locke felt that all men were subject to natural laws, and that men, before forming society, possessed certain natural rights. Each individual was born with these rights, among them were the rights to life, liberty, and property. According to Locke, all men were equal in their possession of said rights. The only major problem was that often an individual or a group might encroach on the rights of another. Because of this danger, men formed societies (made civil governments) to protect and preserve as much of their natural freedom as possible--each man who entered society agreed with his fellow man that he would surrender some of his natural freedom in order to protect himself from the evils which might befall him in the "state of nature" (one gave up some freedom, but in the long run gained more). One further point should be stressed: the only reason for civil government was, according to Locke, to protect as much as possible the rights of each individual, and when individuals formed their government, they did so with the basic agreement (contract) that the sole purpose of the government was to protect and preserve individual rights. If, therefore, anyone broke this contract and transgressed on the rights of the individuals in the society, those wronged individuals would have some legal recourse to justice; or in the case that the wrongs were committed by members of the government itself, those wronged would have the right to leave or overthrow the government which had failed to live up to its stated purposes (purposes stated in the original contract forming the government, granting the power and authority to rule).

There are several considerations we should mention in reference to identity and the ideas of Newton and Locke. First, it should be obvious that in both, there is a new emphasis on man's role in the universe. God no longer held center stage, supposedly He, God, started the whole process going, like a celestial mechanic, but it was no longer assumed that He was actively moving men and events. The script might have been written,

the machine set in motion, but now, like a self-winding watch, the earth supposedly ticked along through space and time--men were a part of the great plan, a plan born of a distant past. Man's role was related to his ability to learn from experience, to reason and discover the nature of the universe; he had power to understand the laws which kept the universe going.

Newton and Locke lived during the seventeenth century, but like many great thinkers, their ideas had their greatest impact in the years that followed. The eighteenth century is often called the Age of Reason, or the period of Enlightenment. These terms are most appropriate, for many of the men living then were convinced that they had more ability to reason and more "light" than any previous age had had. They viewed history as a long, yet progressive, struggle, with man grappling with the forces of darkness and ignorance, and finally in their own age with man reaching a high point in his conquest of the unknown, in his conquest of the forces of nature which had hitherto kept him in bondage. The faith of these "Enlightened men" was not that man had reached a final plateau, rather that he was moving onward and upward in his search for answers. Education was central to the new thinking--the educated man could contribute directly to the progress of man in society. Man could change society, destroy the old and create the new, as long as he used reason in his task. The idea of historical progress was also central to Enlightened thinking. The eighteenth century popularized and applied that which had been discovered in the earlier period. Reason, progress, and individualism were three of the most important intellectual concepts of this period.

Needless to say, the Enlightened view of man and history was more "this worldly" than that of the medieval period. Not only was man seen as a dignified creature, capable of reason and progress, but also this life was viewed as relatively more important than the next. Post-medieval thinking was oriented toward life on earth, rather than life in heaven, and the discovery of the New World, in this respect, went hand in hand with awareness of the importance of this world. The idea of heaven, perhaps related to the idea of "the garden," became associated with an earthly garden, in the here and now--America, and the great waves of Europeans who sought new life on her shores, played an important part in this shifting, historical drama. Many thought this new world would be the place where the free individual might find salvation. (It is interesting to note how many of the early explorers, such as Ponce de Leon, sought to find eternal youth and salvation in some earthly form--their search was part of the changing identity from the medieval conception of utopia (in heaven) to the modern conception!

But lest we stress too much the differences between Enlightened man and his medieval ancestors, we should mention briefly some of the similarities. Both medieval man and Enlightened man were convinced that there was an overriding unity or plan to the Universe; both assumed lawfulness for the events and circumstances surrounding man in history; both perceived history as making sense in terms of the divine plan (although for the Enlightened man, God was much less active on the stage of historical fulfillment); both had a view of progress, even though one sought his rewards beyond the limits of earthly life; and both had tremendous faith in their own presence in time and space, and in their mission to spread the Word. It should also be remembered that reason was for the most part still an article of faith, not a process of thought--thus, like the medieval peasant, most eighteenth century men accepted truth on faith (even though in theory they believed that truth developed from a scientific approach to experience). One of America's greatest historians, Carl Becker, wrote a book on the similarities of the two ages. In speaking of Locke's contribution, Becker suggested that Locke:

made it possible for the eighteenth century to believe with a clear conscience what it wanted to believe, namely, that since man and the mind of man were shaped by that nature which God had created, it was possible for men...to bring their ideas and their conduct, and hence the institutions by which they lived, into harmony with the universal natural order. With what simple faith the age of enlightenment welcomed this doctrine! With what sublime courage it embraced the opportunity to refashion the outward world of human institutions according to the laws of nature and of nature's God!  
(The heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers, 1932, 65.)

"Universal natural order" is perhaps the key phrase in that statement--neither age doubted the ultimate meaning and harmony of the world, both had the comfort of "conceptual unity" which far outweighed the insecurities of individualism to which we have already referred. Natural law provided a substitute for the mother church. The differences in the periods were significant, yet the similarities were equally significant.

We have now considered some of the important changes which took place in the breakdown of the medieval world, and we have emphasized a shifting sense of identity which accompanied them. That changing identity was itself a factor in creating changes which in turn affected identity.

There is one final point which should be mentioned before moving on. This relates to the development of modern nationalism. The new faith in man and progress was often manifested in a faith in the "nation" as a vehicle for social and political advancement. The importance of the state had been increasing steadily during the decline of medieval institutions. In 1648, when a series of bloody religious and political wars came to a close, Europe was beginning to take on the appearance of the modern state system. In many instances, powerful nobles had managed to consolidate political power, and had brought religious authority, both Catholic and Protestant, under state control. Although Europe in 1648 was still very much dominated by the nobility and clergy, the middle class was everywhere in evidence, and in less than 150 years three important revolutions, the English (1688), American (1776) and French (1789) were to shake the aristocracy from the position which it had managed to gain in the new nation states. (This generalization is less true for America, since there is a serious question about how much "aristocracy," in the European sense, ever existed in the Colonies.) It was with these Revolutions, especially the French Revolution, that men began to anticipate the possibility for social reform and progress through the institutions of the nation state; it was with these Revolutions, especially the American and the French, that Western men, even those in the lower classes, began to dream of salvation through national progress; it was with these revolutions that national identification became something more than a monopoly of the ruling elite--after 1789, the common man in France began to look on himself as a national, as a Frenchman. In America, as we know, two wars with Great Britain created a national spirit. For Americans, the new national system of government was viewed as an instrument of progress and freedom. By the early nineteenth century many Westerners looked on the nation as a vehicle for social progress. The spirit of revolution spread rapidly: it traveled southward through the Americas, and its seeds were planted in Africa and Asia by European imperialists and missionaries.

Democratic-liberalism (we use the term "liberal" in speaking of Locke's political ideas because there is so much emphasis on man's ability to "liberate" himself from the so called evils of the past) was written into the American political tradition; ours is



a middle class, liberal tradition, democratic in form, involving a faith in progress through the preservation and promotion of individual dignity under a government of laws.. Our faith is in man's ability to move forward in peaceful progress through a political system in which individuals make their own laws to protect their rights. The emphasis on individual rights is accompanied by an emphasis on individual responsibility --the strength and success of the society supposedly depends on the strength and success of its individual members. Our emphasis, as Lincoln once noted, is on government of, for, and by the people. Although the majority rules, the individual is guaranteed certain safeguards (e. g., as in the first ten amendments.) .

The industrial revolution which swept over the Western world, at least Western Europe, and then the United States, in the nineteenth century, aided the cause of liberal democracy in some important respects--at least to the extent that much of the new wealth was in the hands of the middle class. (Where industrial revolution was most successful--in England, France, and the United States--, the middle class was able to gain many of its political objectives; where the revolution was least successful--in Eastern Europe, and throughout much of Central and South America--, the middle class was least successful.) It is ironical, however, that in the long run, industrialization produced many serious problems for the middle class with its deep faith in the principles of democratic liberalism. The same can be said of nationalism--like industrialism, it created many problems for Locke's descendents.

It might be helpful to review some of the major points before moving on:

Both Newton and Locke helped create a new emphasis in Western identity; they stressed man's equality before natural laws--Newton in the physical, Locke in the social, realm. The new thinking was more this-worldly, and man-centered, and it was also more concerned with the individual, thus contributing to an increasing emphasis on self. Enlightened man differed from his medieval ancestors with his new emphasis on progress, reason, and individualism.

In some important respects, however, natural law was much like medieval thinking. The Newtonian world-view provided a faith not unlike the faith of medievalism. It viewed the world as lawful, with meaning and direction in history; it offered conceptual unity.

The New World fit nicely with the emphasis on this world, and in this sense stimulated the already increasing tendencies toward the conquest of space and time.

Much of the new liberal faith was manifested in national institutions, especially after the middle class stimulated the idea that political reform and revolution might produce utopia on earth (the French Revolution meant a great deal to many in this respect). At the very end of our discussion, however, we dropped the hint that nationalism, as well as industrialism, was to give democratic liberalism its share of trouble.

## II. The Identity Challenged

We have noted that economic changes were important to the changes which were taking place in man's view about himself and his world. The Enlightenment was inseparable from the economic revolution in trade in commerce of the sixteenth and seventeenth



centuries, and these in turn stimulated the already active Middle Class. Faith in the New World, as part of faith in this world, involving the exploitation and settlement of the Americas, was part of this general historical picture: it was the beginning of the modern world. Political revolutions--the English (1688), American (1776) and French (1789)--were in part the attempts of the Middle Class to gain political strength to go along with the economic power they already possessed. Natural law, with its emphasis on the rights of the individual, especially his property rights, was a political philosophy which reflected the interests of this economic class.

In this paper I have attempted to suggest some of the factors which have contributed to a changing sense of identity in Western man. The major objective thus far has been to establish some understanding of how a particular kind of world-view, and thus a particular self-view (identity), arose in Western society. This identity is that which we have described with the term democratic liberalism. The term is used to bring to mind several major ideas and characteristics which can be attributed to many (not all) of those people who lived, and still live, in the modern Western world. Hopefully we could now construct a model man who reflects the major ideas and characteristics of democratic liberalism. One could readily point to many in American history who fit such a model: Ben Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and a host of others come to mind. They all shared in the Enlightened sense of identity, with its emphasis on reason, progress, and individualism--they were Lockeans in their political views; theirs were Middle Class ideals. They shared the view of history making sense over long periods of time, and of mankind making sense in a progressive, historical process. In one respect, then, this has been our objective: to suggest a model identity from which we might proceed. We are now ready to proceed.

During the nineteenth century most Americans were taught, or perhaps I should say, given or indoctrinated with, a democratic liberal view of man in his historical march. The conception of history was linear and progressive; it envisaged America at the crest of a west-bound wave of human hope, always moving toward that promised land, toward that time and place when all men would be blessed with spiritual and material salvation (on earth). This view was a source of individual identification, it provided youth with a set of ideas with which they could identify in terms of their own experiences. Nature had been good to most Americans (at least most white Americans) in providing plenty, and in offering free security from potentially powerful enemies. Europe was not only far off, but also involved in a system of power balances which, for the most part, provided America with free security. Good land, few people, and weak enemies thus combined with other factors to produce rich soil for the seeds of democratic liberalism which had been blown across the Atlantic. The Lockean faith had a powerful impact on the course of American history--it is evident in the writings of Bancroft, the speeches of Lincoln, and in the daily lessons of McGuffey (we have already mentioned the importance of Locke for Jefferson, and other Founding Fathers). More importantly, however, it was a powerful shaping force for the behavior of millions who saw America as the place where they might escape the toil of tradition, where they might enter the garden which had hitherto been beyond worldly expectation. Leap-frogging into the sunset, the frontier was always the sign of tomorrow's new promise--and tomorrow could be visualized in concrete terms: religious and political freedoms, economic opportunities, the second chance. As seen by Americans and many more who looked toward America, Clio, the Muse of History, appeared pregnant with promise. Melville's Ahab was important to nineteenth century America, but not as the rule, as the exception! "Go west young man, go west!" that phrase seemed to make sense as far east as Moscow!

Thus, what we so often consider the basic ideas, the core, of our heritage--those ideas which found expression in our political and social institutions, as well as in our economic pursuits--, were manifestations of a particular kind of historical consciousness, involving a sense of relatedness to a past and future which many individuals could readily accept. A good part of this American Way, or American identity, can be viewed as wishful thinking, but a good part was, and perhaps still is, rooted in reality. We might think, in looking back, that the identity was unrealistic and overly optimistic, but we cannot deny it as part of our past.

The Lockean model has suffered some serious setbacks during the past century. Many of the challenges which have arisen have been external to our shores. For example, Marxism was, and still is, for the most part, a threat arising outside of the United States. This is true of Fascism as well. On the other hand, some of the challenges to democratic liberalism have arisen from within--the threat which the large scale business organization poses to the individual is an example which should be familiar to all of us. In the following paragraphs we will look briefly at some of the historical ideas and events which have presented challenges to the nineteenth century American sense of identity.

On the European continent, starting early in the nineteenth century, many individuals became disillusioned with the promises of the liberal faith. It was not easy to envisage the fulfillment of individual needs in the conditions and circumstances which accompanied the development of modern industrialism. Restlessness developed in many of those men who found that political and economic promises were not being fulfilled. Even many who were successful became disillusioned as they looked at others who were not. The industrial revolution produced a mass of workers--men, women, and children--who were living in poor social and economic circumstances. Poverty and disease were not new of course, but with the rising expectations of mankind, they seemed less tolerable than before--the American and French revolutions had kindled a new faith, and the combination of rising expectation and empty pocketbooks helped produce radical restlessness. Many had heard the promises of democracy, but still, relatively few had tasted the fruits. One of the results of this phenomenon was Marxism.

Like democratic liberalism, Marxism embodied a faith in a new, historical golden age, and in this respect, both ideologies were steps away from the medieval conception of a utopia in some eternal relationship to the "Father." Unlike the Middle Class faith, however, Marxism rested on the belief that history moved toward its utopia in a series of violent revolutions that could not be turned back. Marxism held little place for the individual--the Marxists assumed that iron, economic laws pushed history toward its inevitable consequence, world communism. The chosen people were not individual, enlightened men who used reason, rather they were a particular economic class, the working class (proletariat), who were destined to one day emerge victorious in the violent clashing of classes which would bury democratic liberalism and its Middle Class believers.

Locke had stressed the importance of private property (in part because the Middle Class had struggled against those of the Old Regime who had been granted special economic privileges by their governments), but Marxism called for the workers to unite and take over the state, in order to control the economy and destroy the economic power that had come to rest in the hands of the Middle Class. Socialism, the state ownership and control of the economy was part of the Marxist plan for progress toward their brand of historical utopianism. In the final victory of communism, Marxists claimed that the



political forms of the state would "wither away," leaving nothing but the perfect society, in fact bringing an end to all historical change as men had hitherto experienced it. Both democratic liberalism and Marxism promised to bring peace and harmony to mankind; both were off-shoots of the Western faith in the lawfulness of the world; and both conveyed a view of historical time sequences which involved substantial changes in human society in a progressive development. Both faiths were related to the Judeo-Christian conception of a "promised land," but an important alteration was that the land of milk and honey was no longer viewed as something at the beginning (Garden of Eden) or outside of time (Heaven), rather the perfect society would be achieved by men in time, here on earth. In this latter respect, the Marxists were, and still are, much more utopian than the democratic liberals. Both faiths stressed the importance of the nation as a vehicle for their respective historical dramas, and thus national identification became important to both. The communists, however, at least in theory believed that the state was simply one step toward a final stage where there would be no state; democratic liberals, on the other hand, seemed to place a more permanent faith in the national state (even though in one respect, Locke's ideas speak to "all men" in all places).

Why should communism be a challenge to democratic liberalism? The answers should be obvious. Communism teaches that the Middle Class will be crushed in a series of great revolutions, and, as Marx correctly noted, Lockean ideas are closely related to the Middle Class. Communism also teaches that the individual, as individual, has no power in the face of deterministic, economic laws which move history in a series of violent class struggles--the democratic liberal, of course, cannot accept this kind of determinism.

In the twentieth century, democratic liberalism has suffered some serious setbacks at the hands of communism. Marxism thrives on violence and social upheaval, and especially on economic collapse. Marxists have taken advantage of the terrible warfare that has shaken the world--Russian Communism took hold during the First World War, Chinese Communism during the Second. Some Marxists think that if another war were to break out, the entire world would then swing into the communist camp. Although communism is basically an external threat as far as the United States is concerned, economic depression in the 1930's created some serious doubts among many Americans, and in some instances Marxist ideas found favor on American shores. Steinbeck's book, The Grapes of Wrath, although not itself a communist inspired piece, reflected this tendency to move left in the context of the Great Depression.

The left has not been the only problem for the democratic liberals, the right, fascism, has also gained at the expense of the center. While communism called for radical change toward something new, fascism asserted itself in behalf of radical change toward yesterday, toward preserving or recreating what was assumed to be the pure racial or national "blood." This, as we can see in the ideas of a Hitler or Mussolini, often meant some kind of state worship. The fascists' is no belief in individual rights and responsibilities; theirs is no concern with peaceful historical progress through reason and reform; rather, theirs is a faith in the superiority of force and power, and where necessary, raw violence as a means to preserving and promoting their respective conceptions of what a "state" should be. The fascist shares with the communist a belief in the necessity of violence as the mother's milk of historical change; but unlike the communist, violence and force, exercised by the superior state with its superior people, would always remain at the heart of history--in this sense, the communists are certainly, at least theoretically, more humane than are the fascists.



Like communism, the greatest fascist challenge has been external. But again, like communism, there is internal danger. There are those in America who so worship what they think are American ideals, that they would deny a place in society to all those who disagree with their interpretation of Americanism. We are all familiar with the "hate groups" that preach sick and sad messages in the name of Americanism--any list would have to include the American Nazi Party, the KKK, and perhaps even the Birch Society. Senator Joe McCarthy is a good example from recent American history of one who had extreme, fascist leanings. It would be difficult to count the number of innocent individuals who suffered from his Red scare.

There have been other historical factors and forces which have challenged some of the basic articles of the Lockean faith. Certainly the First World War, the Great War (almost two decades before the Great Depression), sent shivers through the Enlightened soul. The war plunged the West into a collective crisis, one from which it has not yet fully recovered; the war produced identity crisis in many who had come to believe in a world of progress and humanity. Identity involves being someone over a period of time, having a sense of being in time, past, present, and future: "who am I?", "who was I yesterday?" "who will I be tomorrow?" Many who knew the years of terror that swept over Europe, and gradually affected the entire world, were stunned at the animal, the beast, which had been unleashed in the passion which engulfed their world. An older, more optimistic, view of human nature was suddenly more pessimistic--the good, rational man, whom many had expected to go on ruling the world forever, was buried somewhere with the broken bones and dried blood of battle. In All Quiet on the Western Front, Remarque captured this change in attitude through the thoughts of a German soldier:

We are not youth any longer. We don't want to take the world by storm. We are fleeing. We fly from ourselves. From our life. We were eighteen and had begun to love life and the world and we had to shoot it to pieces. The first bomb the first explosion, burst in our hearts. We are cut off from activity, from striving, from progress. We believe in such things no longer. . . .

The war gave birth to the "lost generation." The old sense of identity was shattered for many; yesterday was destroyed, today was confused; and tomorrow promised no way out. T. S. Eliot captured and promoted some of this mood with his poetry--"The Hollow Men," the "Wasteland"--even the titles tell a story. In one of his best poems, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," we find a man, Prufrock, who knows a great deal about life, who searches to find meaning, but who is imprisoned by his own thoughts, who cannot act, who is paralyzed and, in the end, silent. Eliot, Auden, E. E. Cummings, and a host of others all sang the song of this post-war world.

America had escaped much of the war, and for that reason the illusion of progress continued to reign throughout the Twenties. It was the second death blow, the Great Depression, which struck at the American heart. The Depression, like the war, did more than physically destroy life and property; it attacked a conception of history, it undermined an orientation in and toward history, it challenged the idea that history was progress, and finally weakened the old faith in "free enterprise capitalism." As we have already mentioned with respect to communism, the Depression made some men less sure about their old democratic liberal dream; it made many men doubt their world, their goals, and their lives. (Ben Franklin died in the 1930s--he was over 200 years old! In some respects, the Three Little Pigs also died in the Thirties--some people even

think that the Third Pig was Ben Franklin.) The Depression created a problem for Americans because success had always been part of the American Way--it was often thought that God would protect America even if He abandoned Europe.

The liberal democratic faith in progress, reason, and individualism was challenged and shaken from still another quarter. The twentieth century witnessed a revolution in man's thought about himself. This revolution had deep roots in the past, and yet it was also closely related to the wars, revolutions, and depressions of our time. We can only hint at its general nature in this paper.

At the turn of this century a man named Freud introduced a set of ideas which have all but revolutionized Western man's understanding of himself. Seventeenth and eighteenth century ideas about human behavior were based on the assumption that man was a rational creature; that he was fully aware of his actions and the reasons for them; that he was, so to speak, fully responsible for his behavior because he knew what he was doing. Psychoanalysis (the name of Freud's theories) has demonstrated, however, that much, perhaps most, of man's behavior is influenced by unconscious motives. Freud looked to the dark, relatively unexplored, regions of the mind, and offered some interesting explanations for man's behavior. Why do men laugh? why do they dream?; why do they commit suicide, or spend long hours denying themselves food and shelter?--these, and more, were the kinds of questions which Freud sought to answer through examining man's unconscious life.

Arriving in history just after Darwin, who had already cast doubt over the Biblical account of man's historical origins, Freud seemed to many to complete the picture of man as an animal, rather than a creature in God's image. Even God, that sacred Being for whom even the Enlightened man held respect, was now cast in doubt. Freud suggested that the "Father" was simply an idea which originated from man's inner desire, his unconscious desire, to regain some of the security and understanding that he had received in his early childhood from his real father. Thus according to Freud, man created God, not vice versa.

The events that have shaken this century have not discouraged this kind of human portrait. Natural law, natural rights, reason?--"Hogwash!" says the Marxist, the Darwinist, and the Freudian!

Although most of us will not accept this extreme picture, we must admit that such ideas, along with the events surrounding us in this century, have weakened the eighteenth century Western faith, and have thus shaken, and in part destroyed, a collective sense of identity that long held sway over the Western democracies.

There are several other factors which might be mentioned in examining challenges to nineteenth century American identity. Some critics suggest that changes in the organization of American society, especially the nature of our economic organization, have had a powerful, negative impact on Americans. Often the "organization," the "system," is singled out as a danger to the individual. William Whyte, in The Organization Man, makes this point quite clearly. Others, like Erich Fromm, suggest that the market place ethics of modern economic organization have transformed man into a commodity, or at least have dehumanized him--from his Freudian viewpoint Fromm thus arrives at some of the conclusions reached by Marx. Some artists and writers also chime in on this theme. In Miller's "The Death of A Salesman" we find several individuals seeking meaning and reward in the context of modern American life, and the general result is gloomy.



Identity crisis is a central theme in Miller's masterpiece. A number of artists and writers have, in the past half-century, helped promote a theme of alienation. Kafka's "Metamorphosis" is a classic statement in this respect. It is, of course, difficult to know to what extent such themes represent the "alienation" of individual artists, and to what extent they speak for their fellow men. Perhaps in most instances it is a little of both.

Another challenge, often singled out as important to the kind of problem we are discussing, is perhaps the most important, because it is the most subtle, and also the most internal to our way of life. There are those who point a finger at the nature of democratic ideals themselves, claiming that democracy kills individualism. Even de Tocqueville, the nineteenth century French critic who actually admired America, pointed out how the majority sometimes exerted a frightening power over the individual. Question one might ponder in this respect are: "To what extent does a faith in the group, be it a faith in the "majority" or in the "nation" or in both, destroy individualism?; is it possible today to serve society at large, and also serve oneself?" (Isn't this a question which some of our comic book characters, like "Superman" bring to mind?)

Before closing this discussion on challenges we might mention one final, less specific challenge that confronts us. This challenge is related to the sweeping nature of change in the modern world. Our world has been subjected to the most rapid and far-reaching changes that have even confronted mankind. Industrialization, urbanization, and world involvement have, in our society and elsewhere throughout the West and parts of the non-West, created crisis in man's sense of identity. American goals and ideals were molded in the context of a rural, agricultural, and politically isolated land--look at us now!, the raw rate of change has challenged and in part destroyed an older yet younger America. The world which was America is gone. There are many many factors which have contributed to this phenomenon, we have touched on a few. Scientific and technological change have provided the context in which upheaval has become constant. (Einstein's ideas alone have precipitated changes that few can comprehend, and even fewer can imagine controlling.) War and revolution have provoked further war and revolution, and upheaval in the relations between Western and non-Western peoples has arisen in this context.

Perhaps the most common denominator in all of this change is that which relates to man's symbolic "investments" in himself and his world. Man's former investments (in progress, reason, even nation) have been disrupted--cultural gap in this respect is an understatement. Erikson has pointed out that identity--the phenomenon of "who am I" in relation to my world, past and future--has become a major problem in our day, and it is true that "diffusion" and "crisis," both individual and collective, are part of our present condition

In this general circumstance many men are involved in a process of disinvestment, or withdrawal, with respect to old symbolic constructions and definitions. Some are, I believe, in a process of "de-cathexis," or if you will, "falling out of love," with respect to former views of man and history. (History, that is, man's view of himself in time, can be like a friend--one can invest love and one can withdraw it.) Our self-definition, our sense of identity, is hardly that of men who experience themselves as part of a linear-progressive historical phenomenon. For many, perhaps most, Americans, the world has ceased to make sense as it once did even for their parents; there is fragmentation, and the private solution is often an attempt to withdraw, to live in "simple location," to escape time. The ideas of historical promise and progress as once perceived



have been brought to a screeching halt--this is part of that which has produced in some a feeling that perhaps Melville was right, in others a feeling of non-feeling toward history. Some of us don't even have a tragic view of what is happening--even Moby Dick is far from our minds, he is on the rare book shelf with Horatio Alger.

In some respects our challenge is something like the challenge which confronted the soldiers who found Humpty-Dumpty--we must try to put it back together again. Unfortunately, however, it appears that man's ability to analyze and take apart, has not been matched by an equal ability to synthesize and put together. This is as true in the realm of political affairs as it is in intellectual life--in fact, these two are no doubt closely related. For each thinker that might try to develop a meaningful generalization, there must be thousands who never attempt to view themselves in terms of any meaningful whole. Ernst Cassirer points out that no former age

was even in such a favorable position with respect to the sources of our knowledge of human nature. Psychology, ethnology, anthropology, and history have amassed an astoundingly rich and constantly increasing body of facts. Our technical instruments for observation and experimentation have been immensely improved, and our analyses have become sharper and more penetrating. We appear, nevertheless, not yet to have found a method for mastery and organization of this material. When compared with our own abundance the past may seem very poor. But our wealth of facts is not necessarily a wealth of thoughts. Unless we succeed in finding a clue. . . to lead us out of this labyrinth, we can have no real insight into the general character of human culture; we shall remain lost in a mass of disconnected and disintegrated data which seem to lack all conceptual unity. (Essay on Man, 22).

In spite of all our knowledge, our specialization and skill in collecting and arranging data, and our sophistication in conveying it, we are at a loss--knowledge is a problem, not because we don't have it, but because we have it and don't know how to make it meaningful.

In all of the above we have hardly begun to scratch the surface--we have not touched many of the challenges that confront our way of life, such as overpopulation and its sister, starvation. Nevertheless, I have pointed to some of the important forces, events, and issues that make our age one of rapid change and upheaval.

## II. Responses to the Challenges

Man responds in various ways to the forces which challenge his ideas and his institutions. When one's sense of identity is threatened, one often reacts by striking out at that which threatens, or perhaps by withdrawing and isolating oneself from the threat, or perhaps by trying to interact in some constructive way if possible. In looking at groups, there are certain general predictions that one can make in attempting to understand how they respond to challenges and threats. We have discussed some of the changes that have raised serious problems for the nineteenth Century American sense of identity. War, Depression, Big Business and Big Government, Communism, Fascism, Freudianism, etc. have all in part challenged the way in which Americans have defined themselves. How do men in groups respond when challenged in this way? They respond, of course, much the way that individuals do, for the group is a collection of individuals.

We have selected four general categories for looking at the way Americans have responded to challenges to their way of life. The categories are:

- (1) Reaction
- (2) Radicalism
- (3) Withdrawal
- (4) Reinterpretation

Let us briefly examine the meaning of each category, and then suggest some of the ways that Americans today seem to fit them. In doing this let us keep in mind that these are only categories, and that men are not easily placed in categories of any kind. History and man's behavior in history are much more complex than we are able to indicate in this essay.

Reaction and Radicalism: Some people, when threatened, will attempt to "fix" themselves on some part of the present, or perhaps return to something called "the past." For these people, the present might seem intolerable, and therefore they are not happy with where they seem to be headed--the "good old days" become their "god," and every attempt is made to hold onto or reproduce what they think those days are. The term "reaction" is often applied to this kind of behavior, for the ideas of going against and going back are central.

For other people, who also find the present intolerable, the response is somewhat different. They seek to take advantage of change and upheaval by helping to overthrow the present and finding a completely new and supposedly better life in the future--these are the "radicals" in that they want a radical leap into something new. Like the reactionaries they are unhappy with the present; also, they are sure that they have the truth about what society should be, but unlike the reactionaries, they seek an answer in the new rather than in the old. For them, rapid change and upheaval is not so much a threat as an opportunity.

We have already mentioned some Americans who have become reactionary in the context of our rapidly changing world. The "right wing" often seems to desire a return to yesterday. Many of the so-called super-patriots have been, and still are, seeking to turn back the clock to 1830.

Perhaps a smaller number of Americans in the radical category, have attempted to find some means for leaping forward to a completely new kind of world. During the Depression years several thousand became members of the Communist Party, and today, one can find similar tendencies in the thought and action of the "new left." Much of the behavior on the college campus that has been in the news is in fact a radical response to the challenges of our changing world. In general, however, radical responses are not characteristic of people who are relatively wealthy and healthy--in the richest nation on earth, it is to be expected that men will want to preserve the old or go back when the foundations begin to shake rather than try to scrap everything.

Withdrawal: "Withdrawal" refers to the kind of behavior that does not attempt to deal directly with issues and problems. Unlike the reactionary or the radical, the person who "withdraws" does not think about solutions to issues and problems, but rather simply responds to them by seeking some kind of escape. When threats and challenges offer seemingly impossible problems (as in the case of the Bomb which hangs over our heads night and day), often men are overtaken by a "numbness," an insensitivity which protects them psychologically from the very threats which challenge

them. (Another example of this is the tendency that some people have to want to sleep when they are unable to solve their problems--sleep can, in this instance, be a form of withdrawal.) At times such withdrawal might be a healthy thing--what can one gain by thinking about the Bomb all day long? On the other hand, withdrawal can lead to an Ostrich like stance in the world, and we all know what that means.

One way of looking at withdrawal is to think about the term "intoxication." Withdrawal often involves some form of "getting drunk." This might mean getting drunk in the usual fashion, or it might mean something different. Intoxication can mean any form of numbness or insensitivity which takes an individual away from the real issues and problems that confront him. In this sense, there are many kinds of intoxication. Some people might become intoxicated with TV (they sit paralyzed in front of the tube); some might be intoxicated with "noise" (pasting a radio to the ear, and not hearing the rest of the world go by); some might be intoxicated with "mobility" (with being on the go!, as in Keruac's On The Road); and some people might become intoxicated with "consuming" everything that comes along to combat the fright and emptiness that exists within them (an obsession with food or sex or new gadgets, etc. could mean a kind of "consumptive intoxication" which relieves one of facing real problems and issues). We are all familiar with certain kinds of intoxication, such as those associated with alcohol and drugs, but we should also be aware of other ways of "getting drunk."

One of the things that drugs do is relieve one of a sense of location in space and time--they give one a sense of floating through space and over time. There is some evidence to suggest that such behavior is at times valuable in helping individuals find new senses of direction, and new ideas about who they are and where they are headed; but there is probably greater danger in the "withdrawal" becoming something of an end in itself, and in the individual losing all power over rational action.

Some critics believe that the most general behavior in which Americans are involved today is a form of withdrawal through the consumption of any and all the material goods that our economy can produce, regardless of the quality of those goods, or of the economic needs of other people (here and abroad).

Some critics view this as a dangerous situation because they do not think that Americans are aware, or as aware as they should be, of how they can become "numbed" and "intoxicated" with their material consumption. Striving for the second or third automobile often becomes a way of avoiding thinking about the major problems that our society faces, like civil rights and urban riots, etc.

Reinterpretation: The third general category is comprised of those who seek to balance the old with the new; it is a position dedicated to preserving certain aspects of the old without losing sight of the changes that require new insights and new planning to meet the future. For example, many urban planning projects have been attempts to create an atmosphere where individuals might once again believe in and realize the ideas of progress and individual dignity; also, in recent years the government has established job training centers in which men can re-train themselves to meet the challenges of the changing economic environment (such action might help men once again believe in the idea of hard work as a means to success). Those who have advanced such programs have been attempting, although often unsuccessfully, to make old values and ideals a meaningful part of the changing environment.

One of the areas today where some reinterpretation is taking place is the field



of education. Effort has been made, perhaps not enough, to make courses and programs relevant to young people entering a world of swirling uncertainties. (This course is itself an attempt to reinterpret history in a way which might provide more meaning and direction for students than they might find in more conventional courses --the U. S. Office of Education is supporting such experimentation with federal funds.)

In politics several things have developed which suggest the reinterpretation theme. On the international scene the United Nations has time and again proven its worth through innumerable, though seldom heralded, actions which have helped to keep the lid on our boiling planet. The U. N. has been a positive force in helping nations reinterpret their actions in a fast shrinking world. (The fact that the U. S. had earlier refused to join an international organization, the League, is some indication of how this nation has been willing, in more recent years, to reinterpret its stand in the community of nations.)

Nations in general have been willing, in recent years, with a notable exception of Red China, to reinterpret their traditional approaches. The U. S. S. R. is an outstanding example in this respect. Long faithful to the Marxist tenet that Communism would conquer the world through a series of bloody wars and revolutions, Khrushchev took a substantial step in revision of this position by advocating "peaceful coexistence"--this did not mean that the Russian Reds were ready to accept a divided world, nor did it mean that they would cease in their efforts to stimulate violence and eventual collapse in the Western democratic nations; it did mean, however, that the Russians were willing to put aside the banner of total war as a means for achieving their historical objectives. Had the Russians not stepped forth with this crucial bit of reinterpretation in the decade which witnessed their own development of hydrogen weapons and rocket delivery systems (the fifties), it is very possible that both the U. S. S. R. and the U. S. A. would have been consumed in the fires of nuclear holocaust.

The U. S. has cooperated perhaps more than the Soviet Union in establishing a more reasonable climate of international relations. We already mentioned the support which has been given to the U. N. Kennedy's work in achieving the test-ban treaty is another important example in this respect. Also, of course, the New Frontier gave birth to a host of ideas and programs, such as the Peace Corps and the Alliance for Progress, which were designed to reinterpret our role in the community of nations. (Perhaps one very important exception to this trend of reinterpretation is the U. S.'s present involvement in Vietnam.)

The Negro Revolution, more specifically the American Negro's drive for his civil rights, is another example of positive political and social reinterpretation. In the post-World War Two period, for the first time in American history, the Negro has taken substantial steps toward becoming a first class citizen. Needless to say, the identity issue is of central concern in this phenomenon.

In religion, the "God is Dead" controversy reflects another area where basic questions have been raised, but at the same time an attempt has been made to retain some of the more traditional ideas. Along these same lines, recent moves for a united Christian church reflect, in the spirit of Pope John XXIII, an attitude of reinterpretation in a world of rapid change.

But perhaps one of the most interesting and perplexing areas of reinterpretation is that which has taken hold among many young people. Many American youth find it difficult to accept without question standards and views which have been handed to them by parents and teachers, and as a consequence, they seek to establish a new way of looking at themselves and their world. No doubt this is true of most every younger generation, but it seems even more true in this period of history. Many of the new sounds, the Beatles for example, reflect an attempt to reinterpret old values in a new context. Other groups and certain individuals, like Bob Dylan, have likewise called for reinterpretation in a manner which has had a refreshing impact on the world. As Dylan has so often sung, "the times they are a-changin' " and the fact that he has recognized and publicized this fact is itself an indication that he is striking out for a new identity in a new environment. When one listens closely to the new sounds, one finds that they do, in fact, reflect a faith in many of the old values--for example, they emphasize individual dignity, and a world of peace and privacy and progress. The new sounds also seem to accept the fact that the world is now an urban world ("Down Town"), and a world that cannot afford to see the "Bomb" dropped. Thus, more than many politicians and teachers, it seems that the young people have some basic understanding of how to escape the fate of the Ostrich.

Although many young people are attempting to escape or withdraw with little or no purpose other than their own selfish ends, one cannot help but think that most young people are more "with it" than not, and that their behavior reflects an energy and vitality which, when tempered with knowledge and wisdom, will help move history in a manner that will make human life a more dignified venture for the vast majority of men on this planet.

Conclusion: "Who am I, " "Where am I going, " and "How do others see me, " these and others are the questions which one must answer in establishing for himself a mature sense of identity. We have stated that today identity is a problem for many individuals because of the rapid changes which are taking place in the environment. Identity diffusion has been caused in part because of technological and scientific advances which, in the context of war, depression, and revolution, have helped undermine much of the eighteenth and nineteenth century view of man and world. We might live in our own little dream worlds a good part of the time, but when we attempt to define ourselves in relation to what's happening around us, the water gets very muddy.

What about the future?--Where are we going? Who are we going to be as individuals and as a people ten years from now? The answers to these questions are not automatically "in the cards." That is, there is no fixed formula, no final solution written down someplace which will determine what will be in the future. Because our society believes that man makes the laws under which he lives, it also believes that man has some role in determining what the future will be. It is our historical faith, then, that we, the people, have the burden and the glory of changing history, and therefore of molding our own picture of the world, and our own picture of ourselves.

It may seem unfair to end this little statement without supplying some answers to the questions about identity which we have raised, yet, this must be. Each of us has something to say about who he is and what the world is--the future is partly determined inside each of us.

It may well be, as the communists point out, that there are "iron laws" controlling history, and that man's actions are of no consequence; or perhaps it might be that when compared with the giant forces at work one little voice is no more than a piddle in the ocean when it comes to changing history. On the other hand, if we accept either of these kinds of determinism, we might resign ourselves to some kind of withdrawal from action, and in the act of withdrawal we might in fact help make the "iron law" theory come true. (Thus, when one says that his ideas or his actions make no difference and therefore he makes no effort to think or act, it is quite possible that in fact he will make little difference in the world.) The final answers to questions about identity must be found within each individual--this is the only answer that this course can supply for the questions it has raised.



WAR, DEPRESSION, REVOLUTION, & IDENTITY IN THE 20TH CENTURY

## WAR, DEPRESSION, REVOLUTION, & IDENTITY IN THE 20TH CENTURY

During the 19th century most Americans were taught, or perhaps indoctrinated with, a particular way of looking at man and history. The white American of the 1830s was influenced by many European ideas and institutions that had been transformed in one way or another by the American environment. How did this American define himself? Generally speaking, he believed that history was getting better and better, and that the New World, particularly the U. S., had a leading role to play in furthering historical progress. Hand in hand with this general idea of progress was a belief in the capacity of each individual to make a better life for himself. He had faith in his own chances to find success through a combination of hard work and common sense. In the 19th Century many Americans assumed that they were capable of understanding and conquering nature--the whole continent was there for the taking; and "rugged individualism" was a key to success.

As part of their identity, many Americans considered themselves better than Europeans--Europe was in the past, America represented the future, the better tomorrow, the second chance. If the old world wanted to benefit from the American experience, Americans would be happy to show the way, but otherwise, most Americans would be happy in being separated from the Old World.

The environment helped Americans identify themselves as rational and superior men. Nature had been good to them (at least to white Americans) in providing plenty, and in offering free security from potentially powerful enemies. Europe was not only far off, but also involved in a system of power balances which, for the most part, provided America with free security. Good land, few people, and weak enemies thus combined with other factors to reinforce man's belief in his own ability to progress indefinitely into the future. Leap-frogging into the sunset, the frontier was always a sign of tomorrow's promises--and tomorrow could be visualized in concrete terms: political and religious freedom, and the chance for a new start. In the middle ages men had often assumed that the "good life" would come after one died; but in the "new world" emphasis was on the promised land in the here and now--progress was progress of man on earth.

For most Americans today answers to questions like "who am I, " "where have I been," and "where am I headed," are not as easily found as they were a century ago--this is to say, "identity" is more of a problem than it used to be. In general terms, the raw rate of change has contributed to the difficulties that many have in deciding on answers to these questions. For two centuries Americans lived in a rural, agricultural, and politically isolated land, but within a matter of decades, urbanism, industrialism, and world involvement were thrust upon them. Briefly, let's consider some of the challenges which the new environment presented for those holding the older sense of identity. Industrialism created many circumstances which challenged the ideas of progress and individualism. While in a general way the industrial revolution seemed to indicate a strengthening of America's place in the world, dignity and opportunity were challenged for large numbers of Americans who found themselves at the bottom of the economic ladder in the late 19th century. The economic system and the city which grew with the system, were definitely threats to the earlier views of individual opportunity. Progressive reforms at the turn of the century, and New Deal reforms during the Depression, were attempts to produce a new balance between the government and the economy, a balance which would preserve some of the basic

tenets of the older identity--Teddy Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and F. D. R. thus sought to reform American life in order to make individualism and hard work meaningful within the industrial context. Today, this challenge still creates many problems for those who continue to believe in The American Dream.

There are other problems, however, which Americans face in relation to the industrial changes that have swept over their world. In looking at the 20th century, especially our relations with other peoples, we find that industrialism has produced problems which seem to threaten and challenge some of our basic ideals. "Outside" forces have often stressed revolution rather than reform in their attempts to meet the problems of industrialism. Starting early in the 19th century, many individuals on the European continent were becoming disillusioned with the promises of democratic institutions. As modern industrialism pressed down upon the workers, ideas about political and economic opportunity seemed less and less meaningful to large numbers of people. Restlessness developed among those men who found that political and economic promises were not being met. Even many who were successful became disillusioned as they looked at others who were not. The industrial revolution produced a mass of workers--men, women, and children--who were living in poor social and economic circumstances. Poverty and disease were not new, but with the rising expectations of mankind (especially after the French and American Revolutions seemed to promise so much to so many), such conditions seemed less tolerable than before. Many had heard the promises of democracy, but still, relatively few had tasted the fruits. One result of this combination of circumstances was the phenomenon of Marxism.

The teachings of Marx reflected a new faith in an historical golden age, an age in which all working men would find individual fulfillment. Unlike democratic views, Marx said that history moved toward its goal in a series of violent revolutions; furthermore, Marx gave little emphasis to the place of the individual in history--iron, economic laws pushed history toward its inevitable consequence, which was world communism. All history, according to Marx, was the clashing of economic classes, the haves and the have nots, and in the final outcome, the working class would be victorious. According to Marx, American society was supposedly controlled by the few wealthy ones, and one day they would be destroyed in the worker's revolt. While democracy had often stressed the importance of private rights and private property for every individual, Marxism called for the abolishment of such luxuries--socialism, the state ownership and control of all property, was part of the Marxist plan for progress toward a more perfect world.

Although not an immediate threat to Americans in the 19th century, Marxism did send shivers up the American spine--"socialism" was, and still is for many, a dirty word. Thus the way a communist defines himself and his historical setting is much different from the way a democrat does--communism has been and still is a threat to the traditional American sense of identity. The problem has been made worse by the fact that Communists, taking advantage of violence and social unrest in this century, have had several major victories. During the Great War, Russia became a communist nation; just after the Second World War, China turned Red; and some Marxists think that if there were another world war, the rest of the world would go communist.

Another outside "ism" that has challenged the 20th century American sense of



identity is "fascism." While communism called for revolution toward some new and inevitable equality for all men, fascism sought to establish the idea of racial and national superiority. This often included the idea of one man, a great leader, taking charge of a state, and the idea of all men within that state bowing to worship at his feet. Supposedly the leader embodied all that was good and noble and powerful in the people themselves. Hitler and Mussolini are usually singled out as the two outstanding examples of this kind of "identification"--they are good examples of fascist heroes.

The fascist's is no belief in individual rights and responsibilities; his is no concern with peaceful historical progress through reason and reform; rather, his is a faith in the superiority of racial and national force--where necessary, raw violence will be used to preserve and promote the "state" which embodies the superior race of men who supposedly should rule the world. The fascist shares with the Communist a belief in the necessity of violence as the mothers' milk of historical change; and with the communist, the fascist also hates the kind of individualism and reason which is preached on American shores; unlike the communist, however, emphasis is placed on a superior race (rather than a superior class).

Again like communism the greatest fascist challenge to the American has been external, but there is also internal danger. There are those in America, even today, who so worship what they think are American ideals that they would deny a place in society for all who disagree with their interpretation of Americanism. We are all familiar with the "hate groups" that preach their sick and sad messages in the name of Americanism--any list would have to include the American Nazi Party and the KKK. Senator Joe McCarthy, who claimed to be fighting communism, is a good example from recent American history of one who had fascist leanings and it would be difficult to count the number of innocent individuals who have suffered from his kind of "red scare."

Like communism, fascism feeds on the fires of violence and the ashes of poverty--wherever fear and ignorance and hopelessness prevail, radical tendencies, be they communist (left) or fascist (right) also prevail. These forces, communism and fascism, riding on the wave of war, revolution, and depression which has characterized our times, have challenged the American view of man and history.

Other challenges have plagued Americans with respect to the way in which they had come to define themselves and their world. It had always been assumed that tomorrow would be better than today, and that progress in general was a fact of history. In this century, however, certain doubts have arisen with respect to this aspect of our identity. For example, many who knew the years of terror that swept over Europe during the Great War were stunned at the animal, the beast, which seemed to be unleashed in the passion of total war. An older, more optimistic, view of human nature became suddenly more pessimistic--the idea of a good, rational man, whom many had expected to go on ruling the world forever, was buried somewhere in the bones and blood of battle. Western Europeans, even more than Americans, felt a wave of pessimism sweep over their world. In All Quiet on the Western Front, Remarque captured this change in attitude--these words come from the mouth of a German, but they could have come from an Englishman or a Frenchman or an American as well:

We are not youth any longer. We don't want to take the world by storm. We are fleeing. We fly from ourselves. From

our life. We were eighteen and had begun to love life and the world; and we had to shoot it to pieces. The first bomb, the first explosion, burst in our hearts. We are cut off from activity, from striving, from progress. We believe in such things no longer...

The war gave birth to the "lost generation." For some Westerners, the old sense of identity was shattered; yesterday was destroyed, today was confused; and tomorrow promised no way out. T. S. Eliot captured and promoted some of this mood with his poetry--"The Hollow Men," "The Wasteland"--even the titles tell a story.

America had escaped much of the war, and for that reason the illusion of progress continued to reign throughout the Twenties. It was the second death blow of the century, the Great Depression, which struck at the American heart. The Depression, like the war, did more than physically destroy life and property; it attacked a conception of history, it undermined an orientation toward progress, and it weakened much of the old faith in the American economic system. The Depression created a problem for Americans because success had always been part of the American way--it was often thought that God would protect America even if He abandoned Europe. Also, the idea that hard work would always lead to individual success was no longer beyond question--many men were willing to work in the Thirties, but the land of milk and honey seemed to have dried up. (Ben Franklin and the Third Little Pig lost a good deal of prestige in this period.)

The American faith in progress, reason, and individualism was challenged from still another quarter. The twentieth century has witnessed a revolution in man's thought about himself. At the turn of the century Freud introduced a set of ideas which have all but revolutionized Western man's understanding of himself. Seventeenth and eighteenth century ideas about human behavior were based on the assumption that man was a rational creature; that he was fully aware of his actions and the reasons for them, that he was, so to speak fully responsible for his behavior because he knew what he was doing. Psychoanalysis (the name given to Freud's theories) has demonstrated, however, that much, perhaps most, of man's behavior is influenced by unconscious motives. Freud looked to the deep, relatively unexplored, regions of the mind, and offered some interesting explanations for man's behavior. Why do men laugh?, why do they dream?; why do they commit suicide or spend long hours denying themselves food and shelter?--these and more were the questions which Freud sought to answer through examining man's unconscious life.

Arriving in history just after Darwin, who had already cast doubt over the Biblical account of man's historical origins, Freud seemed to many to complete the picture of man as an animal, rather than a creature in God's image. Even God, that sacred Being for whom even the 18th century men kept respect, was now cast in doubt. Freud suggested that the "Father" in heaven was simply an idea which originated from man's desire, his unconscious desire, to regain some of the security and understanding that he had received in his early childhood from his real father. Thus according to Freud, man created God, not vice versa.

With the horrors of man's acts during the wars of this century, many men have



come to believe that Freud was to a great extent correct in his emphasis on man's irrational side. Perhaps even more important as far as the "common man" is concerned is the fact that no longer does man's nature seem to be a relatively simple one--teachers now tell students that man is a complex and confused creature much like the world in which he lives (and most everyone will admit that the rather simple 18th century view of man and progress is no longer meaningful).

There are several other factors which might be mentioned in examining the "challenges" to 19th century American identity. Some critics suggest that changes in the organization of American society, especially the nature of our economic organization, have had a powerful, negative impact. Often the "organization," the "system," is singled out as a danger to the individual. A number of artists and writers have, in the past half-century, helped promote the theme of man being separated (alienated) from himself and from his work. Some critics say that the "system" de-humanizes man, that it turns him into a machine.

The idea of the individual being overpowered by the economic system has, in this age of big government, been extended to the political area of modern life. As war and depression have forced onto our government a more active and powerful role, the threat of government becoming destructive to the rights of individuals has become a reality as never before in our history. Big government has helped extend many rights, but it has also trampled on many individuals. Today, as war fever grows over the Vietnam situation, even larger numbers of individuals feel the arbitrary power of the central government.

Along with the economic and political challenges associated with power over the individual, there is the related problem of men finding meaning and purpose in the urban environment which modernization has produced. City life has created a number of problems for which the "traditional American" is poorly prepared. American goals and ideals were molded in the context of a rural, agricultural, and politically isolated land--look at us now!, changes challenged and in part destroyed the older American setting. Scientific and technological advances have provided the tools for change; war and revolution have provoked further war and revolution--and upheaval in relations between Western and non-Western peoples has arisen in this context. Urbanism, industrialism, and world involvement are now hard facts of American life. How to deal with these facts is another matter.

Man responds in various ways to the forces which challenge his ideas and his institutions. When one's sense of identity is threatened, one often reacts by striking out at that which threatens, or perhaps by withdrawing and isolating oneself from the threat, or perhaps by trying to interact in some constructive way if possible. In looking at groups, there are certain general predictions that one can make in attempting to understand how they respond to challenges and threats. We have discussed some of the changes that have raised serious problems of the 19th Century American sense of identity. War, Depression, Big Business and Big Government, Communism, Fascism, Freudianism, etc. have all in part challenged the way in which Americans have defined themselves. How do men in groups respond when challenged in this way? They respond, of course, much the way that individuals do, for the group is a collection of individuals.

We have selected four general categories for looking at the way Americans have responded to challenges to their way of life. The categories are:



- (1) Reaction
- (2) Radicalism
- (3) Withdrawal
- (4) Reinterpretation

Let us briefly examine the meaning of each category, and then suggest some of the ways that Americans today seem to fit them. In doing this let us keep in mind that these are only categories, and that men are not easily placed in categories of any kind. History and man's behavior in history are much more complex than we are able to indicate in this essay.

Reaction and Radicalism: Some people, when threatened, will attempt to "fix" themselves on some part of the present, or perhaps return to something called "the past." For these people, the present might seem intolerable, and therefore they are not happy with where they seem to be headed--the "good old days" become their "god," and every attempt is made to hold onto or reproduce what they think those days are. The term "reaction" is often applied to this kind of behavior, for the ideas of going against and going back are central.

For other people, who also find the present intolerable, the response is somewhat different. They seek to take advantage of change and upheaval by helping to overthrow the present and finding a completely new and supposedly better life in the future--these are the "radicals" in that they want a radical leap into something new. Like the reactionaries they are unhappy with the present; also, they are sure that they have the truth about what society should be, but unlike the reactionaries, they seek an answer in the new rather than in the old. For them, rapid change and upheaval is not so much a threat as an opportunity.

We have already mentioned some Americans who have become reactionary in the context of our rapidly changing world. The "right wing" often seems to desire a return to yesterday. Many of the so-called super-patriots have been, and still are, seeking to turn back the clock to 1830.

Perhaps a smaller number of Americans in the radical category, have attempted to find some means for leaping forward to a completely new kind of world. During the Depression years several thousand became members of the Communist Party, and today, one can find similar tendencies in the thought and action of the "new left." Much of the behavior on the college campus that has been in the news is in fact a radical response to the challenges of our changing world. In general, however, radical responses are not characteristic of people who are relatively wealthy and healthy --in the richest nation on earth, it is to be expected that men will want to preserve the old or go back when the foundations begin to shake rather than try to scrap everything.

Withdrawal: "Withdrawal" refers to the kind of behavior that does not attempt to deal directly with issues and problems. Unlike the reactionary or the radical, the person who "withdraws" does not think about solutions to issues and problems, but rather simply responds to them by seeking some kind of escape. When threats and challenges offer seemingly impossible problems (as in the case of the Bomb which hangs over our heads night and day), often men are overtaken by a "numbness," an insensitivity which protects them psychologically from the very threats which challenge them. (Another example of this is the tendency that some people have to want to sleep when they are unable to solve their problems--sleep can, in this instance, be

a form of withdrawal.) At times such withdrawal might be a healthy thing--what can one gain by thinking about the Bomb all day long? On the other hand, withdrawal can lead to an Ostrich like stance in the world, and we all know what that means.

One way of looking at withdrawal is to think about the term "intoxication." Withdrawal often involves some form of "getting drunk." This might mean getting drunk in the usual fashion, or it might mean something different. Intoxication can mean any form of numbness or insensitivity which takes an individual away from the real issues and problems that confront him. In this sense, there are many kinds of intoxication. Some people might become intoxicated with TV (they sit paralyzed in front of the tube); some might be intoxicated with "noise" (pasting a radio to the ear, and not hearing the rest of the world go bye); some might be intoxicated with "mobility" (with being on the go!, as in Keruac's On The Road); and some people might become intoxicated with "consuming" everything that comes along to combat the fright and emptiness that exists within them (an obsession with food or sex or new gadgets, etc. could mean a kind of "consumptive intoxication" which relieves one of facing real problems and issues). We are all familiar with certain kinds of intoxication, such as those associated with alcohol and drugs, but we should also be aware of other ways of "getting drunk."

One of the things that drugs do is relieve one of a sense of location in space and time--they give one a sense of floating through space and over time. There is some evidence to suggest that such behavior is at times valuable in helping individuals find new senses of direction, and new ideas about who they are and where they are headed; but there is probably greater danger in the "withdrawal" becoming something of an end in itself, and in the individual losing all power over rational action.

Some critics believe that the most general behavior in which Americans are involved today is a form of withdrawal through the consumption of any and all the material goods that our economy can produce, regardless of the quality of those goods, or of the economic needs of other people (here and abroad).

Some critics view this as a dangerous situation because they do not think that Americans are aware, or as aware as they should be, of how they can become "numbed" and intoxicated" with their material consumption. Striving for the second or third automobile often becomes a way of avoiding thinking about the major problems that our society faces, like civil rights and urban riots, etc.

Reinterpretation: The third general category is comprised of those who seek to balance the old with the new; it is a position dedicated to preserving certain aspects of the old without losing sight of the changes that require new insights and new planning to meet the future. For example, many urban planning projects have been attempts to create an atmosphere where individuals might once again believe in and realize the idea of progress and individual dignity; also, in recent years the government has established job training centers in which men can re-train themselves to meet the challenges of the changing economic environment (such action might help men once again believe in the idea of hard work as a means to success). Those who have advanced such programs have been attempting, although often unsuccessfully, to make old values and ideals a meaningful part of the changing environment.

One of the areas today where some reinterpretation is taking place is the field

of education. Effort has been made, perhaps not enough, to make courses and programs relevant to young people entering a world of swirling uncertainties. (This course is itself an attempt to reinterpret history in a way which might provide more meaning and direction for students than they might find in more conventional courses --the U. S. Office of Education is supporting such experimentation with federal funds.)

In politics several things have developed which suggest the reinterpretation theme. On the international scene the United Nations has time and again proven its worth through innumerable, though seldom heralded, actions which have helped to keep the lid on our boiling planet. The U. N. has been a positive force in helping nations reinterpret their actions in a fast shrinking world. (The fact that the U. S. had earlier refused to join an international organization, the League, is some indication of how this nation has been willing, in more recent years, to reinterpret its stand in the community of nations.)

Nations in general have been willing, in recent years, with a notable exception of Red China, to reinterpret their traditional approaches. The U. S. S. R. is an outstanding example in this respect. Long faithful to the Marxist tenet that Communism would conquer the world through a series of bloody wars and revolutions, Khrushchev took a substantial step in revision of this position by advocating "peaceful coexistence"--this did not mean that the Russian Reds were ready to accept a divided world, nor did it mean that they would cease in their efforts to stimulate violence and eventual collapse in the Western democratic nations; it did mean, however, that the Russians were willing to put aside the banner of total war as a means for achieving their historical objectives. Had the Russians not stepped forth with this crucial bit of reinterpretation in the decade which witnessed their own development of hydrogen weapons and rocket delivery systems (the fifties), it is very possible that both the U. S. S. R. and the U. S. A. would have been consumed in the fires of nuclear holocaust.

The U. S. has cooperated perhaps more than the Soviet Union in establishing a more reasonable climate of international relations. We already mentioned the support which has been given to the U. N. Kennedy's work in achieving the test-ban treaty is another important example in this respect. Also, of course, the New Frontier gave birth to a host of ideas and programs, such as the Peace Corps and the Alliance for Progress, which were designed to reinterpret our role in the community of nations. (Perhaps one very important exception to this trend of reinterpretation is the U. S. 's present involvement in Vietnam.)

The Negro Revolution, more specifically the American Negro's drive for his civil rights, is another example of positive political and social reinterpretation. In the post-World War Two period, for the first time in American history, the Negro has taken substantial steps toward becoming a first class citizen. Needless to say, the identity issue is of central concern in this phenomenon.

In religion, the "God is Dead" controversy reflects another area where basic questions have been raised, but at the same time an attempt has been made to retain some of the more traditional ideas. Along these same lines, recent moves for a united Christian church reflect, in the spirit of Pope John XXIII, an attitude of reinterpretation in a world of rapid change.



But perhaps one of the most interesting and perplexing areas of reinterpretation is that which has taken hold among many young people. Many American youth find it difficult to accept without question standards and views which have been handed to them by parents and teachers, and as a consequence, they seek to establish a new way of looking at themselves and their world. No doubt this is true of most every younger generation, but it seems even more true in this period of history. Many of the new sounds, the Beatles for example, reflect an attempt to reinterpret old values in a new context. Other groups and certain individuals, like Bob Dylan, have likewise called for reinterpretation in a manner which has had a refreshing impact on the world. As Dylan has so often sung, "the times they are a-changin'" and the fact that he has recognized and publicized this fact is itself an indication that he is striking out for a new identity in a new environment. When one listens closely to the new sounds, one finds that they do, in fact, reflect a faith in many of the old values--for example, they emphasize individual dignity, and a world of peace and privacy and progress. The new sounds also seem to accept the fact that the world is now an urban world ("Down Town"), and a world that cannot afford to see the "Bomb" dropped. Thus, more than many politicians and teachers, it seems that the young people have some basic understanding of how to escape the fate of the Ostrich.

Although many young people are attempting to escape or withdraw with little or no purpose other than their own selfish ends, one cannot help but think that most young people are more "with it" than not, and that their behavior reflects an energy and vitality which, when tempered with knowledge and wisdom, will help move history in a manner that will make human life a more dignified venture for the vast majority of men on this planet.

Conclusion: "Who am I, " "Where am I going, " and "How do others see me, " these and others are the questions which one must answer in establishing for himself a mature sense of identity. We have stated that today identity is a problem for many individuals because of the rapid changes which are taking place in the environment. Identity diffusion has been caused in part because of technological and scientific advances which, in the context of war, depression, and revolution, have helped undermine much of the 18th and 19th century view of man and world. We might live in our own little dream worlds a good part of the time, but when we attempt to define ourselves in relation to what's happening around us, the water gets very muddy.

What about the future? --Where are we going? Who are we going to be as individuals and as a people ten years from now? The answers to these questions are not automatically "in the cards. " That is, there is no fixed formula, no final solution written down someplace which will determine what will be in the future. Because our society believes that man makes the laws under which he lives, it also believes that man has some role in determining what the future will be. It is our historical faith, then, that we, the people, have the burden and the glory of changing history, and therefore of molding our own picture of the world, and our own picture of ourselves.

It may seem unfair to end this little statement without supplying some answers to the questions about identity which we have raised, yet, this must be. Each of us has something to say about who he is and what the world is--the future is partly determined inside each of us.

It may well be, as the communists point out, that there are "iron laws" controlling history, and that man's actions are of no consequence; or perhaps it might be that when compared with the giant forces at work one little voice is no more than a piddle in the ocean when it comes to changing history. On the other hand, if we accept either of these kinds of determinism, we might resign ourselves to some kind of withdrawal from action, and in the act of withdrawal we might in fact help make the "iron law" theory come true. (Thus, when one says that his ideas or his actions make no difference and therefore he makes no effort to think or act, it is quite possible that in fact he will make little difference in the world.) The final answers to questions about identity must be found within each individual--this is the only answer that this course can supply for the questions it has raised.

## A NOTE ON MATERIALS AND METHODS



## A NOTE ON MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this essay I will discuss briefly some of the materials and methods which have been utilized in teaching the curriculum. Although the course has been taught five or six times utilizing the general framework, it has never been taught in the same way twice, and hopefully the suggestions here will serve as a stimulus for others to develop their own approach within the general framework. This discussion is divided into four parts, each approximating about one quarter of a unit or course.

### I. Basic Concepts and Their Application

I have tried various ways of introducing the curriculum, depending on the level and motivation of the students. With bright, highly motivated students, it has been possible to start with an examination and critical analysis of the rationale itself. This can be done on a high-powered basis by reading or lecturing about the kind of ideas presented in this report; or, more appropriately, by reading and discussing an introductory statement written especially for the purpose (like the one that appears in the first part of this appendix).

One method which has been found effective in introducing the identity concepts, is to put the students in a situation where their own self-concept is challenged. Thus, on occasion I have begun the course by setting up a situation where students are bound to feel themselves threatened--a direct and sometimes dangerous approach is simply to engage in some name-calling; a better approach, I think, is to verbally attack some important elements of the students' sub-culture. For example, on one occasion students were confronted with an attack on the Beatles--everything, including dress, hair style, and singing ability, was under fire--, and the results were exactly what one might have predicted: students responded in ways which could be recorded and later examined "clinically" with the identity concepts. In the process, motivation was greatly increased.

Another way to begin the course is to ask the students to write about some piece of social behavior. Often this can capture their attention, and at some later point it is possible to re-evaluate the kind of analysis that was made initially in light of new concepts (a good pre-post test possibility). Last summer, for example, I began an identity unit with a newspaper article on the Hell's Angels: students were asked to explain the behavior, and then to recommend steps to correct such behavior--although I have not gone far in attempting to evaluate the kinds of changes which are brought by the curriculum, it was evident that when students were later asked to do the very same assignment, their sophistication in viewing the phenomenon in both historical and also psychological terms was remarkable.

The major task in the first part of the course is to have students learn some of the basic identity concepts. Students must acquire understanding of the stages of human development that are presented with the identity model, especially the

period of adolescence, and they must begin to apply their knowledge of these stages. For the more advanced students, readings can be selected directly from Erikson, but in most instances, the task is to select and paraphrase from available materials. A number of interesting possibilities present themselves in helping students begin to understand and apply the concepts. For example, Holden Caulfield, in Catcher in the Rye, is a ready, popular source for exploring "identity diffusion" and "identity crisis." Salisbury's, The Shook-Up Generation, is another rich source in this respect. Or, one can turn to pop records, or newspapers and magazines for the same purpose. For example, several years ago, the New York Times ran a front page story about a man named Daniel Burros, who was a Nazi leader who had for many years concealed his Jewish origins. The article exposed Burros's "hidden" identity, and the following day, the Times ran the result of its exposure: Burros's suicide. This kind of story is obviously rich with possibilities for learning and applying the identity concepts. One can have the students speculate on the effect of the newspaper exposure on Burros's behavior, and then let them compare their speculation with the actual events that followed.

There are many dangers which one encounters in having students learn and apply the concepts. One danger is that the student might become obsessed with his own behavior, and perhaps seek to use identity concepts as some kind of eternal formula through which he can understand himself and the world. Another, and a more likely, danger is that the student will simply grasp the identity jargon with little basic understanding of its clinical meaning. I have found that these risks are worth taking. Everything depends on how well the teacher is acquainted with the concepts, and how the material is designed and taught. I have usually tried to have students view the concepts with healthy skepticism; to see them as one might see clothes in a store, as something to "try on" to see how they "fit." It is important to avoid an atmosphere in which the student is promised a crusade to the salvation of ultimate knowledge and self-understanding.

## II. Historical Background

We have spoken briefly of this dimension of the curriculum. Let me offer some sample materials and methods that have been utilized. Depending on the level of the student, many possibilities exist in developing some awareness and understanding of the historical dimension. There are a number of ancient and primitive studies, primary sources and secondary works, which are appropriate. Frazer's study The Golden Bough provides rich soil for developing the animistic and religious aspects of the curriculum; and, of course, the Old Testament is a rich, ready source for exploring man's religious mode of thinking, as well as his historical awakening.

The historical essay, Identity and Western Historical Development (pages 99-120 ), might be utilized in one of several different ways, again, depending on level of the student, the time available, etc. Rather than forcing the essay down

the students' throats, it would be better to engage in a process of "superficial induction"<sup>1</sup>; that is, a process which would allow the students to examine sources, reach conclusions, and then move to the historical essay to compare their views with the views presented in it. In the past I have used both primary and secondary sources for each of the historical post-holes, and then turned to the historical essay--that essay is not designed to make sense unless a good deal of previous exploration has been made, or, unless time is taken to examine source materials as one proceeds through the essay. (An understanding of the identity concepts themselves is also essential in this respect.) Thus, for example, one might start reading the essay, and then stop where it mentions St. Augustine, and read into certain parts of The City of God in order to better understand how Augustine's thinking is woven into the narrative. Or, as another example, when reading that part of the essay which speaks about the Protestant Ethic, one could launch into a sub-unit in order to hammer home the major points. In the course I am now teaching, we read some original sources from various Calvinists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; we examined some of the sources that were greatly influenced by that kind of thinking--like the writings of Ben Franklin, and some "lighter materials," like The Three Little Pigs; and we finished up with some consideration of historical and sociological scholarship that has been done on the phenomenon--excerpts from Weber and then Tawney. By the time we were through, hopefully, students had a pretty good understanding of what was meant in the text by "Protestant Ethic."

That dimension of the historical narrative which deals with the Enlightenment, and more specifically with the thinking that characterized the birth of the American nation, and its early development, is a crucial dimension, for it is the foundation for the later examination of "challenges" and "responses" in the twentieth century context. In speaking about twentieth century American behavior, the concern is with challenges to and responses from those men who believe in the basic tenets of liberal democracy as traditionally stated. Aside from the sources that surround the founding of the nation, there are many others that are appropriate in helping students develop an understanding of the nineteenth century liberal democratic outlook. Students seem to enjoy reading McGuffey's readers, and other educational materials; also, there are numerous secondary sources that are valuable here.

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<sup>1</sup> Professor A. Stanley Bolster, with whom I work in Harvard's teacher training program during the summer, often uses the term "superficial induction" in reference to those tasks where the student is expected to go through a process of developing a conclusion that is already built into the materials. This is often a very effective way of having students learn and understand, and it is what is usually meant by the "inductive approach," witness the approach to history in the "new social studies." There is nothing wrong with it, except for the fact that those using it often assume that they are doing less manipulating than they are in fact doing.



So much depends on the interest, level, and intelligence of the students that it is of little value to make more concrete suggestions on this aspect of the course.

### III, IV. Challenges and Responses

Hopefully most of the last half of the course will deal with twentieth century history. The last two sections of the curriculum are designed to point up certain problems and challenges which confront those holding liberal democratic values and ideals. The two historical essays in this appendix suggest many of the topics that might be utilized in this task. I usually spend several weeks on Freud, for although one might hold that Freud actually advanced man's rational understanding of man and society, there is no doubt that he also brought into question many of the older assumptions about human behavior. Furthermore, his ideas have been used to manipulate and exploit the "innocent." The events of World War One, and especially their impact on the Western mind, tie in nicely with considerations about man's unconscious life--we have spent time reading some accounts of the Great War, and the literature also, like All Quiet On the Western Front, in an attempt to understand how it was that many Westerners became disillusioned with their dreams about reason and progress. More specifically on the American scene, the Depression provides an opportunity to see the tenets of the older faith under fire. And with these twentieth century considerations, it is possible to enrich the narrative with documentary films, recordings, etc. By this time, too, students should have the basic framework of the course well in hand, and should be able to contribute much to the teaching task. Many students are good at making tapes, films, slide-tapes and the like, and these, of course, usually are worth a dozen teacher contrived lessons.

The explicit focus of the latter part of the curriculum is on present and future behavior. The idea is to help students begin to feel themselves as part of the unfolding--theoretically, and hopefully, the unifying theme, the idea of an earlier set of assumptions and values, the liberal democratic model, being challenged, will serve to stimulate in them the desired sense of rational, historical involvement.

In seeking to arouse in students this kind of involvement, many interesting curriculum possibilities present themselves. For example, childrens' literature is a relatively unexplored goldmine for teaching changing values. In looking at changes in the traditional American attitude toward hard work, saving, etc., one can compare and contrast stories of today with those of yesteryear. Dr. Suess's The Cat in the Hat offers a very interesting contrast to the Three Pigs, or to most of Beatrix Potter's books. Changing the focus a bit, Miller's Death of a Salesman is an interesting document to contrast with many of the earlier, American success stories. Again, depending on the level of the student, one can move more deeply into the literature--I have used both The Lonely Crowd and also the Organization Man in teaching this part of the curriculum. On one occasion, after reading excerpts from the Organization Man, students read Superman, Batman, and Spiderman comic books, and, attempted to see if and how they were relevant to some of Whyte's points.

Many students were able to see how these characters faced identity problems with respect to public and private lives--it is interesting to note how often these books end with the main character wondering about his own individuality, or lack of it.

One must be careful not to leap to unwarranted conclusions in this kind of investigation. On the other hand, it is all too often the case that we fail to stimulate thinking in students for fear of not living up to some artificial "truths" that are established by each of the many different sciences that deal with human behavior. I am not attempting to justify sloppy thinking, but rather suggest that a cautious utilization of the imagination on these matters is perhaps a worthy step. If intelligent questions about the tension between individual privacy and social responsibility can be raised by reading Spiderman, then let's read Spiderman. If one wants to read Toqueville at the same time, all the better! (Although the students won't find it as interesting.) The curriculum provides much flexibility, and a good deal of room for "play." It is designed to have this kind of flexibility, but hopefully without losing its general structure, and its narrative sweep.

The final part of the identity curriculum, like all the other parts, is flexible. With the "better students" it might be appropriate to re-examine the course rationale, criticising it from many angles. All students should be asked to consider the extent to which they think the curriculum an attempt to provide an "ideological outlet"--which in fact it is, given one definition of the term--and, if so, what dangers or benefits might result. As the course draws to a close, students should not feel a security in having found solutions to major issues or problems; in fact, they should feel on their shoulders some of the weight which all choosing agents must feel; hopefully, however, they will carry their burden more rationally and more creatively.

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"Identity and Democracy"

A Senior Level Social Studies Course

Glenn W. Hawkes

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TE 499 995



## "Identity and Democracy"\*

### I. Introduction

Theoretically the social studies curriculum should provide young people with some means for coming to grips with the problems they encounter as citizens in our democracy.

(This has been a long unchallenged assumption, and accounts for the traditional, senior level Problems of Democracy course.)

The task is formidable under the best of circumstances, and especially difficult in an age which is characterized by unprecedented leaps of scientific technological, and psychological change.

We have been told that ours is an age of anomie, anxiety, and alienation; that we are "hollow men" living in a moral vacuum; that we are without direction, afloat on the sea of modernity with faulty gyroscopes; indeed that we seek to "escape from freedom" rather than accept its burdens.

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\* The following statement is an introduction to and summary of research now completed under a U. S. Office of Education contract: project title, A Philosophical and Historical Rationale for a New Approach to 'Problems of Democracy'; Sponsor, Professor Donald W. Oliver, Harvard Graduate School of Education; research conducted by Glenn W. Hawkes.

Mr. Hawkes is chairman of the history department at St. Mark's School of Texas, Dallas, Texas, where he and Mr. John Huie team-teach a senior level course entitled "Identity and Democracy"; they also conduct a parent-son seminar in conjunction with that course.

One might question many aspects of this sketch, but there can be little doubt that discontinuity and disorientation do characterize our perception of the world. The people who tell us this are not irresponsible fatalists; more often they are critics who have thought deeply about the condition of modern man. To speak of cultural gap in the context of present world circumstances is to speak in understatement. Never before have so many ideas, institutions, and value orientations been so violently shaken and dramatically dated in such short periods of time; cultural roots have been torn from the soils which nourished them -- self-recognition has been undermined in a century of total war and revolution. As Eric Erikson has so persuasively pointed out, identity -- the phenomenon of "who am I" in relation to my world, past and future -- has become a major problem in our day. At a time when the only constant seems to be change, "identity diffusion," and in many instances "identity crisis," both individual and collective, casts its psychological shadow over a world already straining under more concrete problems.

Faced with these general circumstances, many educators have concluded that we are no longer justified in teaching kids, "what to think," we should concentrate on the "how." With respect to Clio -- traditionally the queen of the social studies

realm -- people in general and educators in particular have expressed disillusionment and discontent: "the past," so they tell us, "is no longer an effective 'tool' for dealing with the present and the future." At first glance this reasoning appears to be reasonable, for why should one teach about George Washington and Ben Franklin when their world has so thoroughly vanished under the impact of the twentieth century? In some instances the educator has turned to the historian and asked him to justify his claim that Clio should continue to rule in the social studies -- unfortunately, the historian has more often than not withdrawn in silence. Thus Clio, especially in her story-telling capacity, has been sent to the corner -- apparently as punishment for her alleged irrelevance.

The recent emphasis on teaching the structure and the process of the various disciplines is a sophisticated, and in some instances a valuable, response to the challenges which complexity and change hold for our civilization. Following the new prophet, Jerome Bruner, many educators have experienced a renaissance. The disciplinary approach has had a substantial impact on the social studies curriculum. Educational publications are bulging with good tidings about the "new social



studies." Curriculum projects and workshops based thereupon have been multiplying at rabbit-rate, and cash is everywhere making the social studies grass quite green.

A basic assumption underlying the disciplinary approach with respect to history is that it, like psychology or economics, has a particular structure, and involves thought processes which can be analysed and taught to students; and, when done successfully, this will produce in students the ability to explore and manipulate reality with another disciplinary tool.

But there is something shallow, almost naive, in the kind of thinking which has characterized much of the new social studies movement, especially that part which has focused on the nature and social utility of history. If one accepts the proposition that identity is a central problem in our age, this shallowness should be readily apparent. The world is not easily envisaged as something which makes sense from a series of different disciplinary vantage points (nor should it necessarily be so). When the average person sits down to watch thirty minutes of Huntley-Brinkley, he does not seek to understand what he sees and hears in the same manner that a disciplinarian seeks to understand any given problem or

circumstance. Certainly there is value in being able to look at issues and problems with the methodology and organizing ideas of a psychologist or a sociologist, but there is even greater value in being able to look at those problems in terms of one's self, one's sense of "who am I" and "where do I stand."

Donald Oliver and James Shaver (Teaching Public Issues in the School, 1966) have taken issue with the new social studies approach. They correctly point out that most of the problems and issues in our society are not handled through disciplinary channels; and that democratic decision-making, as a public-sociological as well as a private-psychological phenomenon, involves processes of value conflict and resolution that are not subject to the "processes" and "structures" of scientific disciplines. Their proposal is significant for it attacks an unsupported and unstated assumption in the new social studies approach. Oliver and Shaver, however, do not speak directly to the problem that is being raised in this paper.

An individual's sense of identity cannot be separated from his conception of himself as an agent in a particular historical context. This is true even if that conception involves no sense of historical relatedness at all, or a

nonsense view of one's place in space and time, for to have no sense of history is indeed to have a particular kind of orientation in and toward history. To teach students how to become their own historians is, from this writer's viewpoint, to avoid the issue in most of its complexity. A disciplinary emphasis on the craft only obfuscates the importance of many non-scientific aspects of historical thought, and the implications for self-definition which relate thereto.

The central danger in the disciplinary approach is the way in which it suggests a completely subject-object relationship between individuals and history. In the development of our scientific society we have objectivied the universe, including ourselves as creatures therein. This process has made possible many of the great advances from which we have all benefited, as well as many of the difficulties we encounter. Rational thought and action has rested to a large extent on man's ability to "stand apart" and "look at" himself and his world, but there is a danger in construing rationality strictly in terms of objectivity. The virtues of objective analysis are also vices. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the present study of history (and note how one is caught in the language of a subject-object orientation -- i.e., "study of history"), where we emphasize the



idea of an "I" acting on "it," the idea of standing apart and looking on (actually, looking backward). What can happen, and what is happening I believe, is that the student develops an orientation toward history as observer, rather than participant. This point applies to the "critical thinking" school as well as to the disciplinarians. The present approach, reflected in phrases like "I study history," or "the study of history," gives the impression that the individual is spectator rather than agent..

I have been teaching a senior level "problems" course which reflects a concern for the relationship between an individual's sense of identity and his awareness of himself as an agent in history. It is an assumption of this course that one of the fundamental concerns of our civilization is the way men define themselves in relation to events, past and future. The following rationale and curriculum outline indicate the nature of the course.\*

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\* Although work thus far has been at the secondary level, fresh thinking on this problem of historical relatedness and identity is perhaps most necessary at the primary and intermediate levels, for one's sense of historical relatedness is determined by the myths and ideas which are "taught" in the early years. By the time a youngster reaches the secondary level, his orientation toward history (his orientation toward events in space and time) and toward himself as an agent therein, has probably been substantially shaped. Those working with the little ones might begin by changing some of the terminology which contributes to an uninvolved and uncommitted orientation toward the past and the future. For example, history should be called Istory or Mystory.

## II. Rationale

--although the relation between ideas and action is difficult to determine, it is becoming increasingly evident in the study of human behavior that to an important degree man is and becomes what he sees himself as being and becoming, or more accurately, man is and becomes in relation to what he sees himself as being and becoming. That is, one's sense of identity is a major determining factor in one's behavior.

--this existential-psychological proposition can be applied to men collectively, in terms of their social goals and values, as well as to individuals.

--although values and goals (including "critical thinking") can be construed in abstract terms, it is misleading to view them outside of their concrete, historical settings, for every historical period, every individual circumstance, is unique, and self-definition takes place in said unique settings.

--the present age is characterized by a heightened consciousness about the nature and direction of human life, and this is especially true of the Western world where many individuals have developed an increasingly sensitive awareness of "self." Unfortunately, however, meaningful self-definition -- which involves constructive relatedness to a unique socio-historical setting -- has become more difficult to achieve in the present context.

--in part this difficulty is due to the massive increases in knowledge and information which have developed in a context of decreasing unity or "structure" with respect to that same knowledge and information (a phenomenon which Cassirer speaks of as a breakdown in "conceptual unity"); also, historical events and circumstances have themselves conspired to produce what might be termed a "falling out of love" with history (one must admit that Clio has not been very lovable recently). In any case, Western man is threatened with a breakdown in those symbol systems which in the past helped provide a sense of continuity and meaning in context that was envisaged as linear and progressive.

--given this kind of "identity problem," -- and it is a problem to the extent that it is one determinant in producing irrational social behavior -- a logical and vital extension of the present

educational emphasis on structure would be to provide "frames" that might help individuals define themselves as agents related to the very issue at stake, namely the psycho-social upheaval of man as a major phenomenon in modern history. Such structuring might be profitably pursued by using the concept of "identity," for said concept speaks directly to the psycho-social context of the adolescent (often a context of identity diffusion), and it is also instructive in understanding the collective behavior of peoples living in a world of violent and rapid change, a world of collective "identity crises."

--in using identity as a criterion for the selection and arrangement of historical data, the purpose is to symbolically represent the world in a manner which will picture the present as a point in a process of "becoming." To convey this philosophical orientation is not simply to ask for responsible choice, it is hopefully to provide a sense of relatedness toward time which will combat tendencies to construe the present as a phenomenon of simple location. (The assumption here is that in one important respect the historian enters into history existentially through his construction of the past which in turn shapes a path into the future.)

--such an approach would hopefully promote more rational human action through helping individuals define themselves in both psychological and historical terms as rational agents who have a capacity to enter history and shape it. Neither "critical thinking" nor "disciplinary structure" provides the kind of conceptual unity which is crucial to an individual's resolution of identity diffusion. Clio offers promise in this respect, for if men are to move into the future with direction and hope, that future will reflect a conscious concern for goals and programs which take shape in relation to unique historical circumstances.

### III. Curriculum

The following outline sketch suggests one possible way for structuring history to achieve the suggested objectives. There are many approaches which might be equally, or more, effective. It has been suggested that utilizing Eastern religious and historical data would be an effective means for exploring the Western sense of identity. This would certainly add a dimension which is missing here, however, to date I have been working with the following framework:



- I. A presentation and examination of the course rationale-- students understand the existential psychological assumptions upon which the framework rests.
- II. An examination of the central psychological concept, identity, with appropriate illustrative materials.
- III. A post-holed examination of Western history, organized around the concept of a liberal-democratic (Enlightened) world view: first stressing some of the determining factors in its historical development, and then emphasizing certain ideas, events, and circumstances which have challenged and threatened that worldview (and those holding it) in our time:
  - (A) Identity (or lack-thereof) in primitive and ancient societies - animism as a mode of self-definition.
  - (B) The Hebrew sense of identity -- stressing some of the differences between religious and animistic modes of thinking.
  - (C) Greek philosophy as one of the bases for a natural law, scientific mode of thinking about the world and the self.
  - (D) St. Augustine and the Medieval, Christian worldview. The concern here is to help students see the way in which both the Greek and also the Hebrew influence helped shape Western identity, especially through Augustinian thinking.
  - (E) The Transition to Modernism -- "individuation" (as Fromm uses that term) and secularization: Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment, emphasis on the rise of a middle class and its influence on the development of a liberal-democratic (Enlightened) sense of identity. The Enlightened identity model stresses reason, individualism, progress, and natural-lawfulness as central characteristics in the definition of world and self (nationalism is soon added to the list, but with important qualifications). In this unit, emphasis is also given to man's expanding organization of space and time, and the relationship here between man's ideas and his control of the environment.

- (F) National Identification -- with emphasis on the Western democracies, and their impact on the rest of the world.
- (G) Challenges to the liberal faith in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century context:
  - (1) Men and ideas, including Marx, Darwin, Freud and Einstein.
  - (2) Events and circumstances, including urban-industrialism, war, revolution, depression, political extremism (including nationalism itself), the rise of the non-Western world, technological and scientific changes (especially in the areas of communications and weaponry), population explosion, etc.
- (H) Responses to these challenges:
  - (1) Psychological and social upheaval, including forms of withdrawal and escape, such as joining extremist groups of various kinds, engaging in psychological and sociological non-involvement (including "falling out of love with history," becoming one of the "uncommitted," etc.).
  - (2) Reinterpretation -- attempts at finding ways of interpreting the basic tenets of the liberal faith within the new historical context. From a political vantage point this might mean a look at Kennedy's "New Frontier," or Johnson's "Great Society"; from a philosophical standpoint, this might mean a look at existentialism; from the educational angle, a look at Paul Goodman; and from another standpoint, it might mean a careful look at the Beatles. One could lengthen this list by including new thinking in physics, theology, economics, psychology, biology, etc., all of which in part reflect man's attempt to salvage the basic articles of the liberal-democratic faith.

IV. A re-examination of the rationale and curriculum with reference to some of the obvious problems and weaknesses in the historical framework.

Conclusion: One of the strong points of the curriculum is the extent to which it encourages students to direct criticism at itself. That is, for example, students will be asked to consider the extent to which the historical structuring is in itself an irrational response to events and circumstances in recent history; using Erikson's terms, students will ponder the extent to which the identity framework is an "ideological" response. The underlying historical assumption is that reason is something which has developed in history, and can be used in an attempt to grasp historical reality, including reason as part of the historical process. By placing faith in this kind of historical assumption, one affirms man's capacity to function as a rational agent. The historical framework is broad, to say the least. The purpose, however, is to tell a story, both sweeping and also dramatic, which will help convey an orientation toward self, society, and history that affirms one's place as determined by what has been, and also as a determinant in what will be. Thus, the narrative approach (along with the identity concepts) is intended to help students grasp themselves in relation to unique events and circumstances from which they derive their sense of identity, and to which they must address themselves if they hope to survive in a world of swirling uncertainties.\*

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\* In its above form this course is designed for advanced students, however in altered form it can be, and has been, taught to "slower" students (many of the "dropout" variety). In this respect, the results thus far have been most gratifying.



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